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*The Collections of
The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art*

The Collections of
The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art

Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, New York

in association with

The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art



Introduction and Commentaries

by Ellen R. Goheen





*This book was made possible in part
by a generous grant from
the Jacob L. and Ella C. Loose Foundation*

DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF LAURENCE C. S. SICKMAN (1906–1988)

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A Times Mirror Company

Printed and bound in Japan

ON THE TITLE PAGE: *Four Ladies of the Court Playing Polo* (see plate 84)

Library of Congress
Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Goheen, Ellen R.

The collections of the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art.

1. Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art. I. Title.

N582.K3G64 1988 708.178'411 88-19311

ISBN 0-8109-1379-8

ISBN 0-942614-10-0 (Mus. ed.)

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N
582
.K3
G64
1988

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Foreword

Man has always invested meaning in symbols and images in a tireless, uniquely human effort to define his relationship with the cosmos. Religions have codified and focused beliefs about the universe, prescribing behavior and practices meant to reconcile man with forces beyond his control and beyond his comprehension. In ancient and technologically primitive societies these practices were a matter of survival for the society as a whole and perhaps for individuals as well in certain instances. It is not surprising, therefore, that religions generally have spawned much of mankind's artistic production.

Civilizations and complex cultures have also given expression to their secular values and corporate wisdom through art. Norms of behavior espoused by a society have typically been embodied in narrative tales or epics, which in turn have been interpreted time and again by artists. Depictions in stone, wood, paint, or metal of heroes and civic leaders remind people of the values of their society and the expectations it places upon them. Legend and myth, made vivid and meaningful by the artist's hand, teach the accumulated learning of a culture and give it the stability of tradition.

Art has served less weighty goals as well. We have always decorated ourselves and our dwellings. Such impulses have given rise to all sorts of furniture, dining utensils, containers, and even items of no particular utility. The decorative schemes that people have invented over the centuries are as legion as the types of objects themselves. We have, it seems, been unable to resist "beautifying" even the humblest of earthenware utensils. If in the ancient world everything had symbolic meaning, less and less in our modern world has an urgent significance, and more and more has been produced merely for our delight.

In the Occident we have lately discovered art for art's sake and art as a spontaneous outpouring of personal ex-

pression that may or may not be meaningful to anyone save to the person who created it. Such motivations lie behind many recent avant-garde movements. Yet the notions of art for art's sake, art as an avenue for personal expression, and art as a means of perfecting the individual who made it were developed a millennium earlier in China. Some of mankind's most sophisticated and intellectually abstruse paintings were inspired by these rarified Chinese aesthetic theories. Although understandable only to a very limited audience, Chinese literati painting must, nonetheless, be ranked among the glories of the human mind.

Just as we are compelled to make artistic objects, so our societies have always treasured and stored them. Depending upon the epoch and the society, an array of different agencies has been responsible for keeping treasured works. Churches and temples, royal courts, bureaucracies, and museums—at first private and then public ones—have all shared this responsibility at one time or another. The modern museum as we know it emerged in Europe as part of a new order of mechanized industrialization, its accompanying social patterns, and the creation of widespread wealth. The Louvre in Paris was the first of the modern museums operated by public agencies for the benefit of the general public.

In the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth century the young American republic followed suit. Although independence had only recently been won and vast tracts of unsettled wilderness beckoned the energies of a new nation, its leaders expended enormous efforts on building libraries, academies, atheneums, and museums. Right from the beginning, American museums were to be different from their European antecedents. They were to be great halls where men of democratic spirit could roam freely and be enlightened by works of art that distilled the best of mankind's genius. The museums were also meant to be shaped by the American belief in egalitarian opportunity, and so they

were supposed to serve all segments of society. They were to embrace all and to ennoble and to educate, thus providing for society's liberal progress. Moreover, the American museum was to arise from those peculiarly American characteristics of community initiative and local philanthropy. These beliefs about the establishment and support of public institutions, together with an enlightened tax policy, have led to the formation of the most remarkable museum system in the world.

The Nelson-Atkins Museum is not simply a product of these forces; because its history is so very typical of how American museums were built it may be considered a paradigm. It is an art museum of medium size (physically about twice as large as the White House, for example). It is located in the very middle of the United States, in Kansas City, which is itself of intermediate size and often taken to be a typically American city. Like most other comparable American art museums, the founders of The Nelson-Atkins Museum sought to build comprehensive collections that would display the fine and decorative arts of all civilizations and cultures from all periods. The ancient Mediterranean world, represented by distinguished examples of all types and periods of art, inaugurates a selective account of the course of occidental art, one that is highlighted by the museum's particularly strong concentrations of Italian and French paintings of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Stunning examples of American paintings and decorative arts give a glimpse of the art of our own land. Impressionist paintings, both French and American, introduce the visitor to the modern era, while a rapidly growing portfolio of contemporary art rounds out the European and American collections. Although The Nelson-Atkins Museum is a comprehensive art museum, it has developed a specialty in Asian art, notably in the arts of China, that has gained international recognition and made it one of the nation's centers for the study of Chinese art.

In all, given the scope and consistently high quality of the collections, The Nelson-Atkins Museum has been conspicuously successful; yet its collections remain largely unknown outside Kansas City.

The immediate purpose of this book is to share some of the museum's treasures with the world at large and to call attention to the diversity and quality that characterize the institution's holdings. Second, but probably more important, we hope that the reader will find pleasure in looking at inspiring works of man's imagination.

To me fell the enjoyable part of this enterprise: namely, selecting the items to be included. The burdensome chores of preparing the manuscript and organizing the photography campaigns were shouldered nearly unaided by Ellen Goheen. She is uniquely qualified to guide the reader through this concise tour of The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art. She has served in many curatorial and educational capacities at the museum over the past two decades. These experiences have given her a keen acquaintance with the collections of European painting and sculpture, modern art, and even the collections of Asian art. Her admirable resolve and persistence carried the project forward under dauntingly difficult circumstances. It was a heroic effort and our gratitude must be commensurate!

Kansas City enjoys and supports remarkably rich offerings in the arts. Among those who have contributed most to the well-being of the arts in Kansas City is The Jacob L. and Ella C. Loose Foundation, an affiliated foundation of the Greater Kansas City Community Foundation. We thank them for their unstinting support of this project. All who enjoy this volume and who learn from it will readily appreciate the importance of such philanthropy.

MARC F. WILSON

*Director of the Museum and
Chief Curator of Oriental Art*



Introduction

“Like Helmeted Minerva, Springs Kansas City’s New Art Museum.” With this headline, *The Art Digest* of December 1, 1933, heralded the birth of The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art. It had been a remarkable episode, a thoroughly American one. Rather than growing slowly or arising as the result of a collector’s interest or as the composite creation of many such interests, The Nelson-Atkins Museum emerged from the instincts of a forceful, visionary individual who did not himself collect in any substantial way, but who knew that for a city to be truly civilized, art and culture were absolute necessities.

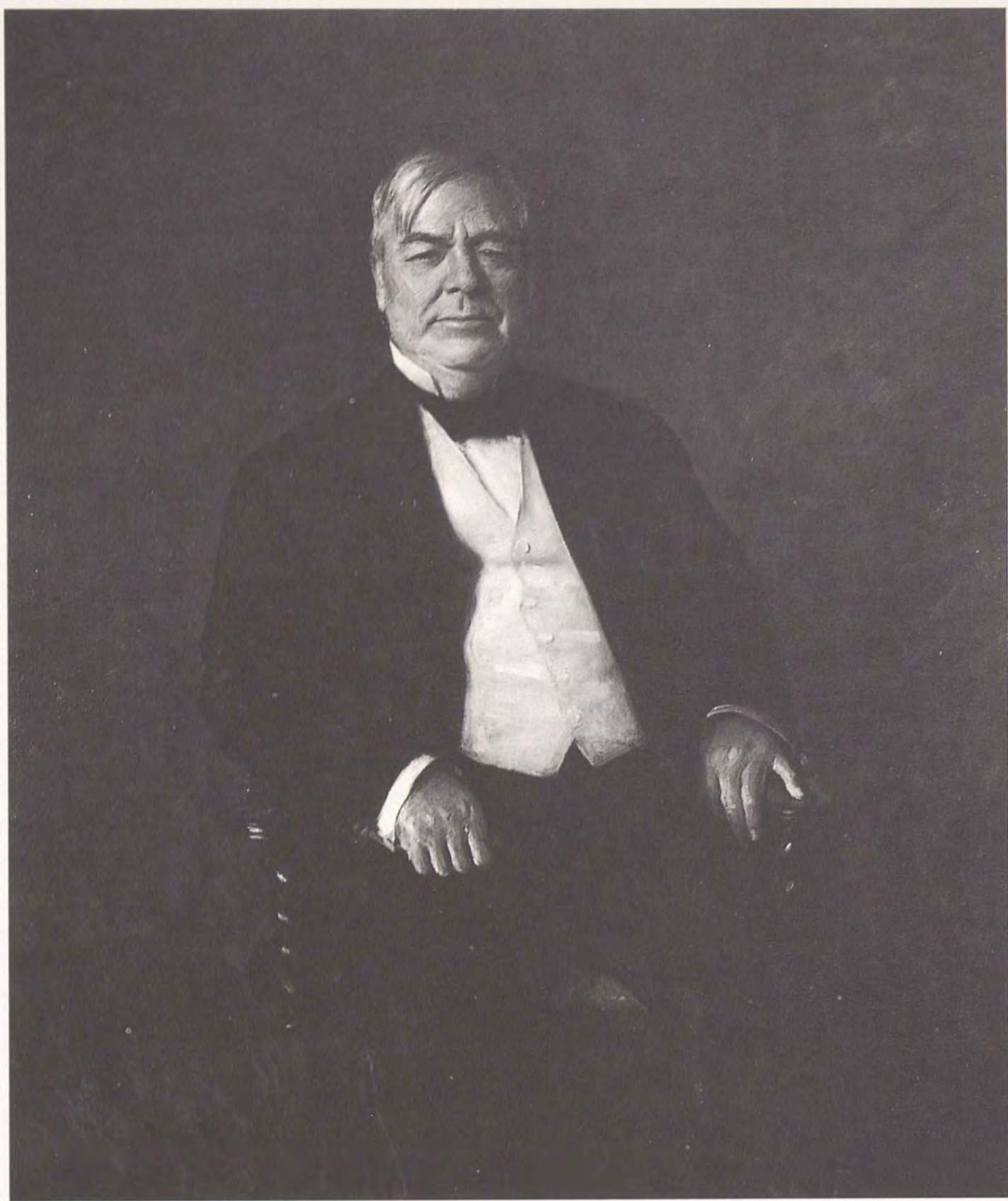
Even in its first moments of life, the Kansas City museum was discussed in the same breath with the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Art Institute of Chicago, and The Detroit Institute of Arts. These institutions were its senior by nearly half a century or so, but The Nelson-Atkins Museum boasted a magnificent new building in the Neoclassical style, a building on which two-and-three-quarter-million dollars of private funds had been spent at the height of the Depression. The museum came generously endowed as well. An impressive bequest of twelve million dollars was in place for its operation and for the acquisition of works of art.

Colonel William Rockhill Nelson arrived in Kansas City in 1880 with big plans and a bright future. He came from Fort Wayne, Indiana, and at the age of thirty-nine had already tried more careers than most people consider in a lifetime, including law, politics, real estate, and construction. He had done well in some, not so well in others. The result was that he was broke by the late 1870s except for an interest he held in a newspaper, the Fort Wayne *Sentinel*. He published the paper with a partner for about a year before he decided to move West in search of greater opportunity. He figured the newspaper business would be a good platform from which to operate in any of a number of fields that might suit his interests.

He soon sold the *Sentinel* and with his partner moved to Kansas City. They wasted no time. On September 18, 1880, the first issue of a new paper, the *Evening Star*, was in the hands of its readers. In short order more presses were bought, a Sunday edition was added, and an existing small paper was absorbed. In little more than twenty years Nelson established the *Times*, a morning paper. Although they faced competition, Nelson’s papers were far and away Kansas City’s most successful dailies, both financially and editorially.

Colonel Nelson wasn’t a colonel of anything. But as William Allen White is quoted as saying, “He was just coloneliferous.” This quality earned him the dubious titles of “Baron Bill” or “Baron of Brush Creek,” but it also allowed him to make an unprecedented impact on the city. Streets, boulevards, parks, planned neighborhoods were all issues with which he and his papers were intimately and vocally concerned. When he arrived, he pronounced Kansas City “incredibly ugly and commonplace” and decided then and there “. . . if I were to live here the town must be made over.”

His resolve to have an art museum in Kansas City was further strengthened after an 1896 trip to Europe. His experiences there reinforced his belief—an art collection was a must. He bought nineteen copies of Old Master paintings from the Florentine studios that so prolifically produced them in the nineteenth century. This was the nucleus of a collection that he called the “Western Gallery of Art.” Given to the school district of Kansas City, the paintings were installed in the public library building so that the citizenry could be exposed firsthand to the ideas and forms of great art. In the nineteenth century, the insistence upon seeing original art was not as keen as it is in our day. Careful copies were not looked upon with the disdain they now elicit. Indeed, a good copy of an acknowledged masterpiece was more worthy than an inferior original work.



William Merritt Chase
William Rockhill Nelson (1841–1915). 1907
 Oil on canvas, 59¹/₂ × 49¹/₄ in

Quality, whether it was manifested in good copies or good original art, was uppermost in Nelson's mind, as was a sense of responsibility and commitment to the public: "Give the people the best there is and they'll respond. I always wished I could hire Rembrandt to work in the *Star's* art department." This abiding pledge to quality and public responsibility has motivated and guided the professional staff throughout the history of the museum.

When Nelson died in 1915, the majority of his estate was set aside for the establishment of the William Rockhill Nelson Trust. The income from the trust was to be used for the "purchase of works and reproductions of the fine arts, such as paintings, engravings, sculptures, tapestries, and rare books." The presidents of the state universities of Missouri, Kansas, and Oklahoma were designated to name a board of University Trustees who would administer the trust and oversee the acquisition and care of the collection. (The first task of the trustees was in fact the sale of Nelson's assets, primarily the *Kansas City Star and Times*, following the untimely death of his daughter in 1926.)

Nelson's wife, Ida, and only daughter, Laura Nelson Kirkwood, were named trustees of his estate. Ida Houston Nelson died in 1921. She had updated her will, committing funds to the erection of a building in Kansas City, Missouri,

to be used for art purposes and to bear the name of William Rockhill Nelson. Laura, her husband Irwin Kirkwood, and Frank Rozzelle, the family lawyer, were named her executors. By 1927 all of them had died. Each had made a provision for some aspect of the grand plan. The colonel would provide the collection; Ida, the building; Frank, the upkeep; and Laura, the funds for the site and construction. In January 1927, seven months before his death, Kirkwood offered the site of Nelson's palatial home, Oak Hall, which had been built in 1887, for the placement of the museum. (Oak Hall was demolished specifically to make way for the museum.)

While Nelson was the aggressive, motivating power behind the plan for an art museum for Kansas City, another much less public figure shared the same dream. In 1911, before the death of William Rockhill Nelson, Mary McAfee Atkins had died at the age of seventy-four. A reclusive woman little known in the Kansas City community, she had left a fair portion of her nearly one-million-dollar estate "for the purchase of necessary ground in Kansas City, Missouri, and the erection of a building to be maintained and used as a Museum of Fine Arts for the use and benefit of the public, to be called the 'Atkins Museum of Fine Arts.'" She had quietly become the most munificent benefactress the fledgling city had ever known.

Many delays occurred in the execution of Mary Atkins's wishes. Wisely, the two Atkins trustees realized that the sum of three hundred thousand dollars was not sufficient to purchase a site and build and maintain a museum and its collections. In 1927 it was decided that the most prudent solution to the dilemma would be to join with the efforts of the Nelson trustees. The two museums would stand on the twenty acres where Oak Hall had stood. Physically indistinguishable from its counterpart, the east wing of the current building is designated as the Mary Atkins Museum of Art.

The Neoclassical structure was designed by the Kansas City firm of Wight and Wight. Indiana limestone and Kacimo marble quarried from the site itself were among the materials used to construct the building. While the orientation of Oak Hall had been east and west, the new museum would be placed on a north-south axis, with its main facade on the south side. The site itself was landscaped by Hare and Hare of Kansas City. Their scheme of plantings enhanced the structure by providing an effective transition from the rustic setting to the rigidly formal design. Indeed, the building sits on the edge of the Rockhill neighborhood, which Nelson himself laid out in the late years of the last century. It is characterized by tree-lined streets with dry stone walls and imaginative homes, many of which effectively combine native stone and shingle construction.

The original exterior of the museum has changed little in fifty-five years. A frieze of quotations from the writings of Wilde, Arnold, Victor Hugo, Gautier, Schiller, Michelangelo, Plotinus, and Goethe extends around the entire building at the cornice level. The words of Plotinus are as appropriate today as they were when he wrote them in the third century A.D.:

Art deals with things forever incapable of definition and that belong to love, beauty, joy, and worship, the shapes, powers, and glory of which are ever building, unbuilding, and rebuilding in each man's soul and in the soul of the whole world.

Narrative sculpture plays an important role in the embellishment of the exterior as well. Centered at the upper reaches of the various planes of each facade are twenty-three panels in low relief that depict the history and settlement of the American Midwest. Twenty-four panels on the great bronze doors on the south and east facades illustrate the story of Hiawatha from Longfellow's epic poem.

Plans are in progress for the creation of a thirty-six acre sculpture park that will incorporate all of the grounds south of the building as well as two public parks, one to the west and another to the south beyond the intersecting boulevard. The first part of the new park to open—slated for dedication in the spring of 1989—will include twelve large sculptures by Henry Moore. The design of the site, a collaboration between Daniel Kiley and Jaquelin Robertson, allows it to accommodate future sculpture acquisitions. This grandly conceived project is a joint effort by the Hall Family Foundations and the Kansas City Department of Parks and Recreation.

Kirkwood Hall is the impressive introduction to the interior of the building. Its walls are faced with Biesanz travertine, the floor is Italian travertine, and twelve colossal columns of black marble from the Pyrenees support the coved ceiling. The four small gray Ionic columns that appear at both the north and south ends of the hall are made of marble from quarries in Ste. Genevieve, Missouri. Rozzelle Court, which was originally an open-air, grassy courtyard, has been covered by a skylight and now is the site of the museum's restaurant, an amenity never considered by the original planners. Constructed of pink and yellow Mankato stone, the court's colonnade is decorated with Renaissance-style murals painted by Kansas City artist Daniel MacMorris.

The architectural firm of Wight and Wight left an indelible mark on Kansas City. In the midst of the deepening Depression, they designed in addition to The Nelson-Atkins Museum a new city hall and a municipal courts building, and they collaborated on the design of a new county courthouse. These buildings, constructed with



Mary McAfee Atkins (1836-1911)

funds from a forty-eight-million-dollar bond issue, constituted the nucleus of a civic center. Although the 1930s were a period of growing political corruption, Kansas City experienced the birth of three major cultural institutions and a building boom unrivaled until nearly fifty years later. In addition to the opening of the museum, 1933 marked the beginnings of the Kansas City Philharmonic and the University of Kansas City, now an adjunct campus of the University of Missouri.

Ultimately the reputation of a museum must rest on its collection. William Rockhill Nelson's only real collection consisted of the Gallery of Western Art. It was necessary to acquire objects for the new temple to the arts. Without an existing nucleus, a collection encompassing the world's greatest art traditions had to be built from scratch. It was a unique challenge. In a typically American way, however, the challenge was met. In 1930, three years before the doors opened to the public, the first works entered the collections. It was decided that the collections would begin with the earliest manifestations of culture from ancient Meso-

potamia and the Nile valley and would range across the continents and through the ensuing millennia but, in accordance with a provision in Nelson's will, would stop short of the present.

A clause in the will precluded the purchase of works by artists who had not been dead for thirty years, although gifts of such works could be accepted. It might have been a conservative point of view, but it was not a unique one. It did, however, put a definite damper on the collecting of art of our own century. Within the community, even within the museum itself, sympathetic souls endeavored to address this challenge. Before the museum opened it was announced that an auxiliary organization, known as The Friends of Art, would be established to undertake the purchase of works of artists falling within the jurisdiction of the thirty-year clause. In 1934 The Friends of Art was organized. Now the collections could reasonably reach from man's earliest aesthetic endeavors to his most recent ones.

In the brief period between 1930 and 1933 an amazing array of works was assembled. When the doors were opened for the formal preview on December 10, 1933, paintings by Titian, Rembrandt, Veronese, Goya, Boucher, and Poussin were in the company of a Greek amphora, Gothic sculpture from Vich, a Chinese lion from the cave complex at Longmen, Tang tomb figures, a masterpiece of Chinese painting by Xu Daoning, and a Polonaise carpet made during the reign of Shah Abbas I. If the achievement was extraordinary, the resolve to enlarge upon the achievement was equally emphatic.

The original trustees of the museum had no personal expertise in the selection of works of art. Recognizing their deficiencies in this area, they assembled a team of experts to advise them in amassing the collections. In April 1930 Harold Woodbury Parsons, an alumnus of Harvard with a background in art history and a glowing recommendation from the director of the Cleveland Museum of Art, where he had performed a similar advisory duty, became the first advisor appointed by the trustees. He would play a dual role, advising both the Cleveland and the Kansas City museums.

From the outset it was understood that the collections of The Nelson-Atkins Museum would be culturally far-reaching, but the emphasis would always be on quality rather than on quantity, with objects being selected for their exceptional aesthetic merits. It was perhaps easier to build a great picture gallery, but it was determined that examples of artistic accomplishment from all of the major cultural developments of the world would be represented. Parsons lost no time in exercising his new duties, and within three weeks of his appointment ten European paintings had been acquired. A month later more paintings, including a great

Titian portrait, as well as Greek and Egyptian art were added. The task had begun.

The budget for acquisition was impressive, second only, some said, to that of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The resources existed to make the youthful museum a serious competitor of any existing institution in the United States, with the exception of certain long-established East Coast collections. The field of contacts widened quickly, and soon interest was expressed in the area of Chinese art. Parsons arranged for Langdon Warner, a Fellow in Chinese Art at the Fogg Museum, to advise the trustees on certain objects of Chinese origin. Earlier, Warner had advised the trustees on some Chinese material that had been offered to the museum. A distinguished art historian, museum administrator, and scholar, Warner too held a post as advisor to the Cleveland Museum of Art.

Warner set off for the Orient in early 1931 on a quest for objects for The Nelson-Atkins Museum. He found works of art, and he made an important contact. His former student, Laurence Sickman, a Harvard-Yanjing Fellow in Beijing, was enormously helpful in seeking out advantageous sources for objects. The ancient city offered a unique opportunity for scholars and students of Chinese culture. The richness of its treasures, both real and intellectual, was unequaled, as we can discern from Sickman's description of one of its streets:

Throughout its winding length there were famous shops dealing in books, rubbings, paper, ink, brushes, and all the paraphernalia of the scholar's desk, while other shops offered the widest variety of works of art and antiquities. Among the proprietors of these shops were men possessing much knowledge about the history and antiquities of their country, and who were tolerant and generous enough to share their learning and experience with a neophyte.

Warner and Sickman's serendipitous encounter would be the beginning of a long and valuable relationship for The Nelson-Atkins Museum. For the time being Warner would continue as advisor to the trustees on oriental art, with Sickman doing valuable legwork in ferreting out unique and extraordinary objects. The political turmoil in China added to the intrigues of negotiating for and acquiring objects. The opportunities for acquisition during the decade before World War II were unparalleled. After the Japanese occupation of Beijing acquiring objects from the Orient became impossible. London and New York became the principal markets for Chinese art. Even during the 1930s a buyer had to develop a close relationship with a dealer or else he would never see the best objects. Success was the result of the correct balance of persistence and patience. Thus, Sickman's contacts in China were vital if the museum was to have access to the finest material.

The European collections were under the direction of Parsons. Warner and Sickman were taking care of the Orient. The trustees began to feel the need for someone to take an overall view of the operation. Yet another Harvard man was tapped for this responsibility. Paul Gardner, then a doctoral candidate at the Fogg and lecturer at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, agreed to accept the position in February 1932. Gardner had an extraordinary background. At thirty-six he held a bachelor's degree from MIT, a master's in European History from George Washington University, and for several years he had been a member of a professional ballet company. One additional person rounded out the complement of advisors. Charles O. Cornelius, New York architect and graduate of Princeton and MIT, was brought on board to advise on American decorative arts and to install the American wing's period rooms. The advance team was complete.

Until recent years the staff of the museum has been remarkably small. When Gardner began his directorship, which he held until 1953, he was the only staff member with a secretary. There was one paid staff member in the education department and a library scarcely existed. Nelson Trust funds could not be used for the purchase of books, so donations had to be sought for their acquisition. Tours were given by staff members. However, the Junior League of Kansas City, Missouri, soon offered volunteers, who began an ambitious and long-lived tour program serving the schoolchildren of the metropolitan area. Sheer ingenuity, abundant enthusiasm, and the force of will brought art to Kansas City.

When The Nelson-Atkins Museum opened in 1933, there were thirty-three galleries and period rooms in the east wing of the building. In April 1941, six new galleries were inaugurated on the first floor of the west wing. Included in this group was a French Gothic cloister, which reportedly came from a dismantled monastery in the north of France near the cathedral town of Beauvais. Because it was felt that the collections in this wing might be more effectively displayed, the windows were masked altogether. Subsequently, the windows in the painting galleries on the first floor of the east wing were also masked. The entire first floor was completed in April 1949, when an additional eight galleries and period rooms were opened. An uncompleted portion of the second floor of the west wing was finished under the terms of the bequest of Mrs. Frank Grant Crowell. Opened in the spring of 1971, it is known as the Frank Grant Crowell Wing and includes the Parker-Grant Gallery of contemporary art. In February 1976 the remainder of the second floor of the west wing was completed, adding eight more exhibition rooms. There are now nearly eighty galleries and period rooms available for the



Laurence C. S. Sickman (1906–1988) in Luoyang, China, examining ancient Chinese ceramics, 1932

presentation of the collections. Although the trustees had prudently allowed room for the collections to grow, the museum's space limitations have now been reached. Further expansion of the physical facilities is a pressing issue.

Paul Gardner remained in the position of director until the end of May 1953. He had set the institution on a firm professional foundation and determined its emphasis was to be educational. Upon Gardner's retirement, the trustees appointed Laurence Sickman to the directorship. Sickman had been serving as curator of oriental art since 1935. Cognizant of the evolving responsibilities of an art museum, Sickman instituted a number of support systems and services for the staff and the public. For example, the "unofficial" library became official. Although open to the public on a limited basis, the library is primarily a reference tool for staff and scholars in the region. Its holdings now approach fifty thousand volumes. During Sickman's tenure, which lasted until 1977, the building would be brought to full completion.

Sickman continued to emphasize the acquisition of works of art of high quality. More than any other single motive, the search for quality determined the composition of the collec-

tions. Following the trustees' mandate to show the art of all cultures, as long as it represented the highest possible aesthetic achievement, Sickman directed the search for objects. While quality was the number one priority governing acquisition, frugality was also a strong motivating factor in building the collection. Early on the trustees had been sensitive to the expenditures of large sums of money for works of art. During the Depression, when they began their quest for a collection, the poor economic health of the country had worked to their advantage. While they had generous resources with which to acquire works of art, they were often able to make their purchases at substantially reduced, if not bargain, prices. Dealers were so eager to make a sale that they were willing to offer discounts that worked to the advantage of the trustees. This finely tuned sense of frugality continued to inform the acquisition process long after the Depression.

Ralph T. ("Ted") Coe followed Sickman as director in 1977. A native of Cleveland, Coe had come to the museum in 1959 as curator of European painting and sculpture. The concept of museums was in an evolutionary cycle. Where once they had been thought of as static repositories, they were gradually becoming more a part of the active life of a community. This was facilitated in part by the growing phenomenon of traveling exhibitions. Additionally, the nature of art itself was changing. Contemporary art often invited audience participation.

A man of diverse interests whose family had collected Impressionist and Post-Impressionist paintings, Coe brought an ebullience and enthusiasm to the museum that penetrated deeply into the visual arts community. Although his tenure as director was relatively brief, lasting only until 1982, his legacy reached far beyond the walls of the institution. He had a talent for encouraging collectors. His infectious enthusiasm for the excitement of acquisition left its mark on a great number of individuals, many of them quite young. He was attracted to the provocative possibilities offered by contemporary art and explored this uncharted area by organizing exciting special exhibitions. One of his first exhibitions was *The Logic of Modern Art*, which he assembled in 1961. This pioneering exhibition of modern painting helped to push the attendance figures higher than they had ever reached in a single year. The next year he curated an equally stimulating show entitled *The Imagination of Primitive Man*. The range of Coe's passionate interests was expressed by the scope of these two exhibitions.

Coe enthusiastically championed the collections of modern art and ethnography by increasing the museum's holdings in these areas and by encouraging private individuals to build collections encompassing this material. The inherent vitality of the art from these two cultural spheres made

them naturally compatible. Coupled with Coe's enthusiasm, they caught the imagination of the public.

In 1963 a traveling exhibition of paintings by Vincent van Gogh attracted the largest audience the museum had ever experienced. The exhibition is still remembered by Kansas Citians as one of the most exhilarating and memorable exhibitions seen at The Nelson-Atkins Museum. Fifteen years later, as the museum's first curator of twentieth-century art, I worked with the internationally known artist Christo to wrap the walkways of one of Kansas City's most beautiful public parks. The museum's influence had truly reached beyond its walls. Coe's tenure as director paralleled a period of public outreach and activity. Additionally, his natural affinity for Impressionist painting left a legacy now impossible to duplicate given the stratospheric prices commanded by such works in current markets. Monet's seminal painting *Boulevard des Capucines* is but one of the important works to enter the nineteenth-century holdings under his curatorship. He also added works by Redon, Cassatt, Degas, Pissarro, and Gauguin.

In 1982 the director's mantle passed to Marc F. Wilson, who had come to the museum in 1967 as a Ford Foundation Fellow in the oriental art department. An immediate affinity developed between Wilson and his mentor, Sickman. Fresh from Yale, Wilson was eager to plunge into the riches of the famed oriental collection. After the completion of his fellowship, Wilson returned to join the staff as curator of oriental art in 1970. Changes in the museum have continued apace. While the curatorial staff had remained small until the early 1980s, it has now increased nearly twofold, with plans for further specialization. Incorporating all of our burgeoning technical innovations into the everyday management of a major not-for-profit organization has been an exciting challenge that Wilson has met with great enthusiasm.

The changing nature of the art market and the astronomical sums commanded by objects of high quality have introduced their own challenges. These have been met in part by the generosity and understanding either of collectors or patrons who are committed to the continuing quest for quality additions to the museum's holdings. In the past decade tremendous strides have been made in the growth of the American and European painting collections. These have come in large measure as the result of concerned philanthropy. Paintings by Vigée Le Brun, Eakins, Sargent, and Church have entered the permanent holdings of the museum.

In trying to distill the essence of this institution and to describe what sets it apart from others of its size, one repeatedly returns to its history of few directors, few trustees, and a small staff that has established long-term

commitments to the institution. These factors allow for a certain consistency in vision and in judgment. An additional factor not to be discounted is serendipity.

Nowhere is the influence of these two trends more evident than in the collection itself. Museums reflect the individual tastes that formed them. For the most part, the oriental holdings were formed by the eye and taste of a single individual over nearly half a century. In the first fifty years of the museum's history, the taste and interests of slightly more than a dozen curatorial professionals had coalesced to define The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art.

Serendipity placed Sickman in China at just the moment when oriental art was fashionable but not expensive. The great Burlington House exhibition of Chinese art in London in the winter of 1935-1936, two years after the museum opened, captured the attention and the imagination of the entire art world. Indirectly it focused public attention on the quality and breadth of the Chinese material in Kansas City, and it brought immediate recognition, which in turn encouraged the museum's trustees to continue to build upon this strength. As the collection continues to expand, this strength is still acknowledged. In the past decade, which in terms of acquisitions has been one of the most bountiful ever, most additions were still of oriental origin.

The market prices for non-Western objects have always lagged behind those of European provenance. Indeed, the highest quality could be acquired for a mere fraction of the cost of a European painting. Twentieth-century art, however, was prohibited by the stipulations of Nelson's will. Now when works of high quality from our own century command a price of many millions of dollars, it is questionable whether this lacuna can ever be adequately addressed by the resources of the institution.

Although the seeming preponderance of the museum's objects might be of oriental origin, the range and quality of the entire collection is impressive. In terms of sheer numbers, the European and American works on paper win hands down with six thousand items. The Burnap Collection of English Pottery is comprised of more than eleven hundred specimens. Quantity has never been the goal of the museum, however. The leitmotif has always been quality. While many other institutions may have vast reserves of material, The Nelson-Atkins Museum generally does not. In most areas it shows its best and only face at all times. Its European paintings are of consistently high quality, and emphasis continues to be placed on the acquisition of prime examples as recent acquisitions attest. As long as funds allow for the competitive quest for quality, examples will continue to be added.

Until 1982 only eleven men had served as trustees of the museum and a third of those had enjoyed a tenure of a

quarter-century or more. In 1982, in an effort to expand community involvement in the institution, the board of trustees was expanded from the original three University Trustees to a total of twelve, with nine of the twelve positions having a specified length of service. Of the current dozen members, three still perform the original duties of the University Trustees. Again, a small group of individuals has molded the policies and goals of the institution.

Until 1983 the museum had borne the weighty dual designation of The William Rockhill Nelson Gallery of Art and The Mary Atkins Museum of Fine Arts. Over the years, elements of the name had slipped away in everyday usage. The institution came to be known as "The Nelson Gallery," an abbreviation that ignored the philanthropy of Mary Atkins. The fiftieth anniversary of the museum in 1983 provided the impetus to change the name to The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art.

As *The Art Digest* indicated in its initial article, the museum was big and good and competitive from the beginning. The community embraced it enthusiastically. The enduring, tangible nature of the imposing building and its impressive collections disposed it favorably to the public. However, it is remarkable that until its fiftieth anniversary the museum had never sought financial support from the public in any concerted way. Its posture had been essentially conservative, which had always meant living within its means. As it grew into its reserve space, as the prices of high-quality objects began to rise, and as the size and costs of traveling exhibitions began to increase, it was evident that the museum could not continue to marshal its resources solely from within. It had to turn to the public for support. And the public responded generously. During the anniversary year some fifty-eight million dollars were pledged in contributions and works of art.

An art museum in Kansas City had been the dream of a visionary individual whose forcefulness of spirit could unite the efforts of others. It was an era of individualists. Certainly William Rockhill Nelson's benevolent autocracy was in keeping with other individualists of the age. With pride and ego, men like J. P. Morgan, John D. Rockefeller, Andrew Carnegie, and Andrew Mellon guided the cultural destiny of America from the end of the Civil War through the early years of the twentieth century. A residual sense of autocratic will filtered through to the succeeding generation. The first University Trustees were imbued with such an attitude. Building a museum from nothing was not an impossible task. With money, will, and a clearly defined goal anything could be achieved. The Nelson-Atkins Museum is vital testimony to that spirit.

ELLEN R. GOHEEN

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Genie Fertilizing a Date Palm

Assyrian, from Nimrud (Iraq)

883–859 B.C.

Limestone

91¹/₄ × 71¹/₄ in (231.8 × 181 cm)

Museum purchase: acquired 1940

When the steamboat *William N. Morrison* docked in Saint Louis early in March 1857, nine slabs of limestone were in its cargo. They had been acquired for Saint Louis's Mercantile Library through the good offices of a missionary who was the brother of one of the library's members. He had been stationed at Mosul on the Tigris River, northeast of the ancient Assyrian capital of Nimrud.

Some years earlier, in 1845, the English archaeologist Sir Austen Henry Layard had begun the task of excavating Nimrud. Undreamed-of treasures were the fruits of his efforts. Among his finds was this relief on which is represented the symbolic fertilization of the date palm, the tree that provided the ancient Assyrians with nearly every necessity for their physical existence, including food, drink, shelter, and furniture. This tree, so important to the survival of the ancient Assyrians, fares better when man intervenes in its reproductive process. To insure its optimum growth, the date palm requires artificial fertilization. The unifying theme of the reliefs found in the Northwest Palace at Nimrud is this fertilization process, a ritual that doubtless carried with it potent protective powers.

In the ninth century B.C., on the northwest portion of a sunbaked mud platform the size of six football fields, the powerful Ashurnasirpal II had a magnificent palace built by the prisoners taken in his many military campaigns. In the typical fashion of the day, the palace itself was constructed of sunbaked brick. To protect and enhance the brick structure a wainscoting of eight-foot limestone slabs—including this portion—was applied. The slabs were carved in low relief and highlighted with color, traces of which are still visible in the sandals worn by the figure shown here. Above the frieze the wall was stuccoed and painted with brightly colored designs. It must have been glorious indeed. But the glory of ancient Nimrud came to an abrupt and devastating

end in 606 B.C. when the city was sacked by the Medes. The ruins lay forgotten until Layard began his work. In 1940, nearly a century after the nine slabs arrived in Saint Louis, the museum purchased the relief from the Mercantile Library Association.

Even in its current context, the majestic conception of this elaborate decorative program is evident. In the relief a two-winged genie faces a stylized palm tree. The genie's torso is positioned frontally while the head and legs are in profile. This kind of simultaneous viewpoint was employed by many ancient cultures to allow for the depiction of all the significant details at once. The figure's musculature is highly stylized, and the hair and beard are represented in snail-shell forms, with little attempt at naturalistic representation. The genie's large feet give him a powerful presence. The trees, which appear on either side of the figure, have been reduced to patterns with only rudimentary hints of their leaves and flowers.

The genie wears an ankle-length mantle over a short tunic. At his waist is a wide sash in which two daggers and a whetstone are carried. His garments are edged with fringes and ornamented with tassels. His wings and horned miter denote his divinity. The cone he raises in his right hand is the male flower of the date palm. Presumably the pail in his left hand holds pollen or sanctified water for the ritual.

Superimposed horizontally across the relief is a cuneiform inscription extolling the military exploits and conquests of Ashurnasirpal II. Bas-relief was the distinctive art form of the Assyrians, whose art shared many stylistic characteristics with that of their neighbors the Babylonians. Assyrian art flourished from about 1500 B.C. until the late seventh century B.C. The world's largest collection of reliefs from the Northwest Palace is in the British Museum in London.

Methethy, Palace Official

Egyptian, from Sakkara
Old Kingdom, late Fifth Dynasty (2565–2420 B.C.)
Wood with gesso and pigment
31⁵/₈ in high (80.3 cm)
Museum purchase: acquired 1951

This statue of Methethy, a palace official during the reign of the pharaoh Unas, who died in 2420 B.C., is in a nearly perfect state of preservation. It is made of hard wood, probably cedar, covered with gesso. The entire figure is polychromed, with special attention given to details of ornament and dress. With the exception of the arms and the front of the feet, the figure was carved from a single piece of wood. Since large pieces of fine wood were in short supply in ancient Egypt, it was more economical for a sculptor to carve such elements separately and to attach them to the body with dowels.

Ancient Egyptian figurative sculpture is highly stylized and was governed by strict conventions that do not accommodate the naturalistic representation of anatomical relationships. Art as it is understood in the twentieth century was a concept unknown to the Egyptians. Objects like the statue of Methethy were not meant to be perceived solely as examples of aesthetic beauty. They performed important ritual functions within the culture's complex belief system and, as ritual objects, might be imbued with certain life forces. Because it was important for the *ka*, or spirit, of the deceased to be at peace, a figure such as this was placed in a *mastaba*, or tomb, so that the soul could use it as a comfortable dwelling place.

The body of Methethy has been rendered very simply. He is shown with both feet flat on the ground, with the left leg advanced. Such a stance, with no shift at the hips, is physically impossible; however, it allows the sculptor easily and effectively to provide stability for the piece. In order to accommodate such a position, the left leg was simply made longer than the right one.

In spite of the highly conventionalized quality of the pose, certain small details have been addressed. The pleated linen skirt is fashionably stiffened into a triangular form. The face has inlaid copper eyelids, white alabaster eyeballs, and obsidian corneas. The long, oval nails of the unarticulated fingers are clearly outlined and modeled. The cuticles are indicated by half-moons of white. The thumbs swell slightly at their tips.

Four other statues inscribed with Methethy's name and titles were found at the same time this one was discovered. They are now in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston and The Brooklyn Museum. This one is noteworthy for its remarkably fine state of preservation. Most of the gesso covering and original pigment are intact. Also in The Nelson-Atkins Museum are two painted sunken reliefs from Methethy's tomb that show him accompanied by several of his children.



Sesostris III

Egyptian

Middle Kingdom, Twelfth Dynasty (1991-1786 B.C.)

Brown quartzite

17³/₄ in high (45.1 cm)

Museum purchase: acquired 1962

When this head of Sesostris III, one of the greatest and most powerful rulers of Middle Kingdom Egypt, was acquired in 1962, its nose and upper lip had been restored. The sculpture looked more like a prince of the Rhineland than a pharaoh of the Twelfth Dynasty. X-ray examination indicated that the restoration might be quite easily removed, so this was done before the head was put on public view. Indeed, the removal of the added nose and upper lip restored integrity and vigor to this likeness, which was once described as "the most important piece of the Middle Kingdom in the Western Hemisphere."

The Middle Kingdom encompasses the Eleventh and Twelfth dynasties, a period of vitality and territorial expansion for ancient Egypt. Sesostris was the fifth king of the Twelfth Dynasty. His family came from Thebes in the south, but they established their capital in northern Egypt, not far from Memphis, capital of the pharaohs of the Old Kingdom, in order to preserve the political unity of the two Egypts.

It is unclear if this head of brown quartzite came from a seated or standing figure. The use of hard stones such as quartzite, schist, diorite, and granite was common in Middle Kingdom sculpture. The figure from which this head comes was most probably not designed as a sympathetic likeness for the habitation of a spirit in a tomb, like the *Methethy* (plate 2), but rather as a monument to inspire, awe, and inform the living. Its colossal size served to emphasize the superhumanity of the monarch.

At first glance, the features of Sesostris appear quite

individualized. His long, oval face is defined by prominent, overhanging brows, heavy-lidded and deeply set eyes, and high cheekbones. His large, sensuous lips curve downward into his strong, rounded chin. The eyes and the set of the jaw impart a sad, yet insistent expression. In the later Middle Kingdom there was a tendency toward greater naturalism and the desire to express the inner life of a figure. Although other portraits of Sesostris reinforce the features seen here, a similar sense of weariness is frequently represented in the likenesses of figures of authority from the same period. A "type" may have been developed to represent the character of rule, superseding specific physiognomic characteristics. The look of weariness may have been meant to convey the great stresses of responsibility experienced by a ruler.

The forms of Sesostris's head are soft and evocative, but by no means has every detail been included. A simple horizontal furrow defines his brow, for example. Sesostris wears a *nemes*, a white linen headcloth highlighted with red stripes and designed to be tied at the back of the neck. The *uraeus* he wears over the *nemes* is an emblem of the sun god *Ra*, which was appropriated by the pharaoh, his earthly representative, as a symbol of kingship.

Despite the efforts at naturalism, the sculpture retains its lithic qualities. Stone statues of this period were normally carved from one block. Color was often added to earlier statues, but from the Middle Kingdom on, color was rarely added to work done in the hard decorative stones. It is possible, however, that the *nemes* would have been painted.



Head of a Kouros

Greek

c.490 B.C.

Island marble

7¹/₂ in high (19.1 cm)

Museum purchase: acquired 1938

This head, presumably from a standing male figure, or *kouros* (used as a funerary or possibly as a votive monument in a sanctuary), belongs stylistically to the Archaic period, which began about the mid-seventh century B.C. and continued until about 480 B.C., when the Persians sacked Athens. As the Archaic period evolved, the depiction of the human figure became less emblematic and abstract. By the early fifth century a more naturalistic rendering of human anatomy was achieved. This paved the way for the artistic preoccupation with the human figure in the Classical period, the most brilliant age of Greek sculpture.

The head, though damaged, demonstrates a mixture of abstract and naturalistic features. The eyebrows and lower lip are perfect curves, while the cheeks and upper lip are less crisply geometric. The result of this elaborate linear interplay is an enigmatic perkiness.

The chief materials used for larger sculptures in ancient Greece were stone (limestone or marble), bronze, terracotta, wood, and a combination of gold and ivory known as chryselephantine. Wood sculptures have long since disinte-

grated; gold and ivory were generally too precious to survive intact, and bronze was melted down for other purposes. It is stone sculpture and to a certain degree terracotta that have survived and informed our view of ancient statuary. We are now used to seeing the semitranslucent quality of marble in ancient works and tend to forget that they were often painted, either entirely, in the case of limestone, or partially, in the details of works in marble. Accessories in various materials were frequently added to the sculptures. Eyes were sometimes inlaid, even during the Archaic period, with colored stone, glass, and ivory. Metal curls and perhaps even earrings enhanced the presentation.

This head is remarkably similar in style to material in the Athenian treasury at Delphi. A growing interest in the way things work in nature and not simply a complete surrender to geometric stylization is apparent. The definition of the hair has been given a great deal of attention. The head is covered with locks of snail curls that have a three-dimensional quality.





Statuette of a Bearded God with a Dagger

Etruscan, from Apiro

c.460–450 B.C.

Bronze

16 in high (40.6 cm)

Museum purchase: acquired 1930

The Etruscans are still something of a mystery. Their culture first appeared in the eighth century B.C. in northern Italy. By 700 B.C. they had firmly established themselves in an area bounded by the Arno, the Apennines, the Tiber, and the Tyrrhenian Sea. In antiquity this region was called Etruria. By the second or first century B.C. they had been culturally and politically absorbed into the Roman world. Their art is redolent of many influences, including indigenous Italian traditions and a certain orientalizing tendency, as well as strong ties to Greek styles.

Over a foot in height, this figure may represent Tinia, the god in the Etruscan pantheon who most closely resembles the Greek god Zeus. It is also possible that the figure actually represents the god Maris, or Mars. In his left hand he holds a sheathed dagger. He raises his right hand as though to hurl a spear or lightning bolt. He is nude but for a short cape, or *chlamys*, thrown over his shoulders and wrapped around his left arm. This garment is richly decorated with incised patterns and round punch marks. His short hair, pointed beard, and mustache are carefully

striated with wavy lines. Originally, his eyes were probably inlaid. As the figure appears now, he seems intently focused upon an unseen objective.

The statue is conceived fully in the round. Only in the lower portion of the body does the understanding of anatomy and balance seem to suffer. The left foot is flat and the left knee is bent, while the toes of the right foot touch the ground and the knee remains straight. A cursory reading of the pose implies imminent movement, but in fact the posture is an impossible one. The left leg would be considerably longer than the right if such a stance were to be imitated in real life. Nevertheless, the grace and nobility of the figure are exceptionally strong.

The Etruscan countryside was rich in copper, an important ingredient in the manufacture of bronze. From the earliest times bronze was a favorite material of the Etruscans. It was employed in the manufacture of their utensils and furnishings, as well as in their art. The standard of Etruscan craftsmanship was high, as evidenced in this marvelous example.

. 6.

Head of a Woman

Roman

A.D. 120–130

Island marble

25 in high (63.5 cm)

Museum purchase: acquired 1948

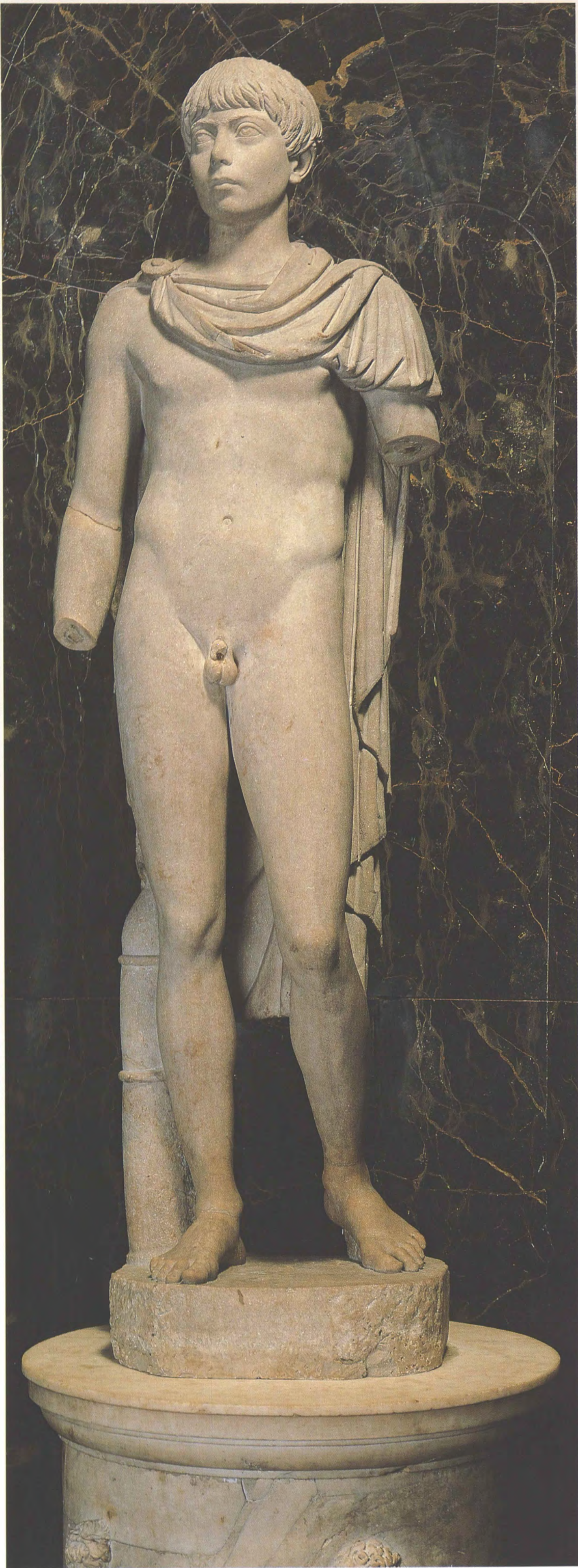
The portrait reached its zenith in Rome, having been introduced from Greek sources in the second and early first centuries B.C. The Greek inclination toward a geometric canon of form and beauty gave way to the Roman interest in careful representation of the individual. Indeed, the head of a statue became more important to the Romans than the body, which was often characterized by stock examples. In some cases, heads of statues would be interchanged. The Romans were very fond of the bust form, which allowed for the representation of the head and upper torso. (The term *bust* is derived from the Latin *bustum* meaning “sepulchral monument.”)

While the Romans displayed great interest in verisimilitude, this example seems to combine both a sense of the individual and a certain quality of idealization. In Roman portraiture women generally fare better than men. They are spared the ultimate detail of wrinkles and the ravages of time that are frequently depicted in the male physiognomy. Here, certainly, the nose and chin, the high cheekbones and slightly bee-stung lips are individualized. These specific features are included, however, in a perfectly oval face devoid of wrinkles or any other surface imperfections.

There is little substantive evidence with which to reconstruct the past of this impressive lady. Relying on style alone offers mixed but intriguing signals. The coiffed hair, which frames the face with masses of tightly coiled curls, is a fashion commonly associated with the Trajanic period (A.D. 98–117), but it was also known in the late Flavian period (A.D. 80–98). It is impossible to tell when it became popular and how long it remained in fashion. Indeed, in some conservative quarters, it could have been favored for quite a long time or even enjoyed a periodic revival. However, the eyes are enlivened by their incised irises and pupils, a stylistic innovation generally associated with the Hadrianic period (A.D. 117–138). No matter what the era of the sitter, it is clear that she was a wealthy individual: her coiffure would certainly have required servants to assist in its creation and maintenance.

The bust is purported to have been found in Alexandria, thus it might be concluded that it was made in Roman Egypt. An acanthus leaf appears on the socle. Its appearance means that the subject is deceased and that the bust may have been made for the woman’s tomb, where it would have stood in a niche.





.7.

Portrait of a Youth

Roman

c.150 A.D.

Island marble

65 in high (165.1 cm)

Museum purchase: acquired 1934

This young Roman is presented in the Greek manner: nearly nude and with his body framed by a *chlamys*, or cloak, fastened on the right shoulder. His youth and the inclusion of the quiver suggest an identification with the god Apollo. He may well have held a bow in one of his missing hands. In the mid-second century A.D. a member of the Imperial family might be portrayed as a divine personage, so it is tempting to conjecture that this youth was in some way connected to the Imperial court. Two additional examples of youths with almost identical features can be found in collections in Libya and Denmark.

The figure conveys a sense of vitality. His eyes have a remarkably lively expression, which is enhanced by the incised irises. His unruly eyebrows add interest to the play of light on his face, and his weak chin imparts a clear sense of personality. The pose recalls the *Doryphorus*, or *Spear Bearer*, of Polykleitos (active c.450–420 B.C.), the most famous Greek sculptor after Phidias, and may ultimately be based on that example. The head is slightly larger than real life, however. This may be simply explained by the ungainly proportions of youth. The overall character of the figure is classical.

Although the figure has been published as coming from Hadrian's villa at Tivoli, there is no conclusive proof of its origins. It was formerly in the London house of a renowned collector of Roman antiquities, Lord Landsdowne (at least a dozen of whose many objects came from Hadrian's villa). The youth was placed in the dining room of Lord Landsdowne's house, which was designed by Robert Adam. The room, which has now been installed in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, had nine niches designed to hold this and other examples of antique sculpture. Lord Landsdowne died in 1927, and the sculpture was sold at auction in 1930. It entered The Nelson-Atkins Museum four years later.

. 8 .

Gold Chain with Pendant

Roman

c.245 A.D.

Pendant, $2\frac{5}{8}$ in diameter (6.7 cm)

Chain $34\frac{5}{8}$ in long (88 cm)

(Reproduced actual size)

Museum purchase: acquired 1956



The particular form of this pendant, known as *clipeata imago* (*clipeus* is Latin for a round shield), is a head rising from the center of a shield or tondo. The obverse of the pendant has a figure of Osiris, the lord of the underworld, flanked on either side by profile hawks symbolizing Horus, son of Osiris. Because of the obverse imagery, the pendant and chain may have had a sepulchral significance and served some funerary function.

In this animated portrait of a middle-aged man, the Roman love of depicting individual peculiarities is evident.

The interest in verism goes back to the Republic (509–31 B.C.), and it is fascinating to see it still holding sway in the mid-third century. It tends to disappear in the late third century.

The attention to detail is impressive. The artist has introduced a sense of monumentality that traverses the lines between the ornamental realm of jewelry and the power of sculpture. The precise attention to detail is seen in the incised irises. The slightly turned glance of the eyes and the wrinkled brow impart a real sense of the sitter's personality.

The Apostles Paul, Andrew, and James

Spanish, from Vich, Catalonia

1140–1170

Limestone with traces of polychromy

31 × 27¹/₂ × 7¹/₂ in (78.7 × 69.9 × 19.1 cm)

Museum purchase: acquired 1932

The ancient Spanish city of Vich lies forty-two miles north of Barcelona. Known as Ausa to the Romans, and Vicus Ausona to the Visigoths, it was an important center throughout the Middle Ages. By the fourth century it was already a Christian town. In the early eleventh century the see of Vich was ruled by Oliba, who became bishop in 1018. The churches he commissioned were constructed of masonry and decorated with didactic programs of paintings and sculpture. The Romanesque cathedral of Vich was one of the most impressive buildings in all Catalonia. Today only the crypt, a detached tower, and some fragments of sculpture remain. The fragment shown here is one of three to be found in major public collections. (The others are in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London and the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Lyons.) When it was purchased in 1932, it was one of the first pieces of medieval sculpture to be added to the Nelson-Atkins collections.

This relief displays a strongly architectonic character with no foliate and little geometric decoration. The apostles, identified by their names on the books they carry, may have been part of an *apostolado*, or representation of the college of apostles. Andrew and James raise their hands in a gesture of adoration. Each is dressed in stylized, yet quite individual, robes. Although the faces are highly conventionalized, with downturned mouths, straight, flat noses, and lozenge-shaped eyes whose drilled pupils are lead-filled, their hair and beards are differentiated by style and texture. In spite of the shallow space, they are depicted in three-quarter view. They are alert and lively, with large, bare feet that are not burdened by the implied weight. The figures seem to float above the ground. With their fellow apostles, they would have made an impressive gathering on the western portal or in the interior of the cathedral.





Angel with a Flowering Staff

French, from the Abbey of Saint-Epvre, Toul

1175-1200

Limestone

23 × 17¹/₄ × 4¹/₂ in (58.4 × 43.8 × 11.4 cm)

Museum purchase: acquired 1954

Monumental sculpture was reborn in the Middle Ages to enhance the west porches of French monastic churches and cathedrals. Monumental sculpture is not necessarily large in size, but rather it conveys a certain quality of grandeur, nobility, and permanence. The sophisticated, elegant sculptural programs of twelfth- and thirteenth-century Chartres and Reims, satellite towns of the Île-de-France, are among the greatest examples of monumental Gothic sculpture. The decorative programs from the more provincial centers of Toul, Verdun, and Metz are less well known. This enigmatic angel is one of the rare surviving examples of stone sculpture of the twelfth century in northwestern France, an area that has been subjected to repeated military campaigns, especially during the two world wars in our own century. Because of the ravages of war and time, little monumental art from this part of France survives for comparison with this example.

This relief was originally part of the ancient abbey at Saint-Epvre near Toul, but it became an ornament in the wall of an eighteenth-century house, also at Toul. The abbey, founded in the sixth century and one of the richest monastic foundations in its archdiocese, which included Verdun and Metz, was pillaged during the French Revolution and was ultimately sold in 1793. Stones from the ruins, including this relief, were incorporated as ornaments in the houses of nearby Faubourg Saint-Epvre. The piece re-

mained in the façade of the house until the 1950s, when it was acquired for the museum's collection.

Metalwork, ivory carving, manuscript illumination, and enameling were strong traditions in Lorraine. It was these so-called minor arts that influenced the development of the region's finest stone sculpture. Gradually this more local influence was supplanted by the full-blown Gothic style of the Île-de-France.

The angel is looking over his left shoulder, pointing with his left index finger and holding a scepter in his right hand. His cloak, fastened on his right shoulder, is falling over his body and arms in ample folds. His face is fully and simply modeled with a short nose, straight mouth, and slightly slanted almond eyes. The focus of the latter, coupled with a frowning brow, impart a certain look of insistence.

He emerges half-length from scrolls of foliage, which in itself is an unusual representation. His scepter terminates in a split acanthus, rather than the more usual fleur-de-lis, or lily. A scepter held in the left hand is generally understood to identify the bearer as a divine messenger, although our figure may have served a more secular purpose. His wings provide a textured pattern for the background. Their sweeping outlines frame his slightly inclined head. Although the drapery of his garment falls convincingly about his torso and arms, his hair is shown in stylized snail-shell curls.



DON LORENZO MONACO
Madonna and Child

. 11 .

DON LORENZO MONACO
Italian (Florence), c.1370–1425

Madonna and Child

c.1410
Tempera on panel
44¹/₄ × 26 in (112.4 × 66.04 cm)
Museum purchase: acquired 1940

. 12 .

PETRUS CHRISTUS
Flemish, c.1410–1472

Virgin and Child in an Interior

c.1450–1455
Oil on panel
27³/₈ × 20 in (69.5 × 50.8 cm)
Museum purchase: acquired 1956

. 13 .

LORENZO DI CREDI
Italian (Florence), c.1456–1536

*Madonna and Child with the Infant
Saint John*

c.1510
Oil on panel
40¹/₄ × 28³/₄ in (102.2 × 73 cm)
Museum purchase: acquired 1939

The representation of the Virgin and Child had special significance to the early Christian church. It symbolized motherhood; of more importance, it addressed the pivotal doctrine of the Incarnation. In these three paintings slightly different interpretations of the subject are presented, influenced by the cultures from which they came. Two of the paintings are Italian and represent the beginning and end of the Renaissance period. The third is from Flanders and is an outstanding example of the northern European artistic sensibility.

The linear idiom of the artist's native Sieneese school is demonstrated in Don Lorenzo's panel. The Madonna is seated on a cushion that has been transformed into a throne by two obliging angels who raise a lushly brocaded fabric behind her. She feeds her infant son at her breast, a representation especially favored in Siena. Connotations of charity are gleaned from this posture. The Madonna is the mother and nurse not only of Christ but of us all. Don Lorenzo, whose secular name was Piero di Giovanni, arrived in Florence in the 1390s. He became a full deacon of the Benedictine monastery of Santa Maria degli Angeli in 1395. But in his paintings he prolonged the more conservative Sieneese penchant for elegant ornament and tenderness. Mary's white—rather than canonical blue and red—robes and dress suggest this private devotional picture may have been commissioned by a member of the Olivetan order. White is also the color worn by Don Lorenzo's own branch of the Benedictines, the Camaldolese.

Two generations later in the north, Petrus Christus painted an extraordinary vision of the Holy Family. Joseph has been added to the family unit as he enters from the

courtyard in the background. (It is possible that we are witnessing the preparation for the Flight into Egypt.) Unaware of his arrival, the Virgin is seated in her bedroom supporting her son, who holds a crystal orb. He gestures with his right hand toward an open book on the window seat. The room is appointed with a tester bed, a chamber pot, a chest with additional pillows, a small traveling case, and a three-legged stool. A fireplace and a brass chandelier surmounted by a lion, a popular symbol of Christ in medieval art and literature, complete the accoutrements of the interior. The orb held by the Christ Child alludes to His sovereignty. The orange on the sill comes from the faraway Mediterranean. The painting's detail is telescopic and microscopic at the same time.

The colors in this painting are magical. The harmony of red, blue, and green set in the dark brown and blue-to-pearl-gray interior is masterful. Christus's interest in perspective is evident here, as well, as we see the views of the city through the windows and through the door by which Joseph enters. This scene, in which Christus has combined pictorial realism with didactic tradition, might be considered an example of genre painting, while Don Lorenzo's representation is emblematic.

Christus's painting was once in the collection of Caroline, duchess of Berry (1798–1870), the daughter of Francesco I, king of the Two Sicilies. In 1816 she became the second wife of Ferdinand, duke of Berry, the younger son of Charles X of France. The painting is unsigned and was sold by the duchess, who was in need of funds to meet the expenses of her extravagant lifestyle, in a large sale at the Hôtel Drouot in Paris in 1865. It was sold as a painting by



PETRUS CHRISTUS
Virgin and Child in an Interior



LORENZO DI CREDI

Madonna and Child with the Infant St. John

Lucas van Leyden—not an unsurprising attribution. Soon after the sale, however, it was attributed to Christus, or “Christophsen” as he was called at the time. In 1869 the painting appeared in the sale of the painting collection of Prince Paul Demidoff in Paris. The gold clasp on the book seems to bear the date A.D. 1472. If this is correct, this panel is probably the last known work by the master, from whom only approximately thirty paintings survive. His masterpieces are as rare as Vermeer’s.

In Lorenzo di Credi’s *Madonna and Child with the Infant Saint John*, the mother of Christ is seated in a landscape with the luxuriant foliage of a laurel tree forming a natural throne and baldachin behind her. She holds the naked Christ Child on her lap. To her right an adoring infant John the Baptist, son of Mary’s elder cousin Elizabeth, pays his respects to the Christ Child. In turn, the Child offers his blessing. Behind the grouping is a broad river or lake bordered by bluffs on the left and by a mist-obscured city on the right. The bower in which the figures are represented resembles a *mille-fleurs* tapestry with its rich flowers and foliage.

Lorenzo was a fellow pupil of Leonardo da Vinci in the studio of Verrocchio. Indeed, the modeling of the face of the Madonna is reminiscent of Leonardo’s hand. The harmony of the figures in their natural, although idealized, setting is graceful and unforced. Lorenzo di Credi was an engaging technician capable of convincingly describing the textures of flesh, wool, foliage, and even mist. His figures seem to be made of flesh and blood, a far cry from the sinewy, elegant, two-dimensional creatures in Don Lorenzo’s painting, or the doll-like characters in Christus’s scene. During the High Renaissance (c.1500–1520), the Italians completely turned away from the emblematic style of the early years. Instead they sought to represent the human figure by means of anatomically correct drawing attained by a thorough understanding of perspective, proportion, and structure. Devotional panels such as these proliferated in the fifteenth century, commissioned by wealthy and prominent individuals and lay groups.

Lorenzo’s *Madonna and Child* was formerly in the collection of the earl of Dudley and was exhibited at the Royal Academy, London, in 1871 and again in 1892.



. 14.

ALBRECHT DÜRER
German, 1471–1528

Saint Jerome in His Study

Monogrammed and dated 1514

Engraving

9⁷/₈ × 7¹/₂ in (25 × 19 cm)

Gift of Mr. Robert B. Fizzell: 1958

. 15.

ALBRECHT DÜRER
German, 1471–1528

Four Heads in Profile

Monogrammed and dated 1513 or 1515

Pen and ink drawing

8¹/₄ × 7⁷/₈ in (21 × 20 cm)

Museum purchase: acquired 1958

Of the approximately one thousand extant drawings by Albrecht Dürer fewer than forty are in North American collections. Two of them, *Four Heads in Profile* and *Head of a Roebuck*, are in the museum's holdings. *Four Heads* shows the strong influence of Dürer's great Italian contemporary Leonardo da Vinci, who had sketched a similar study of five heads in 1490. Caricature and the study of physiognomy obviously interested both masters. Dürer's insatiably inquiring mind dealt with issues of proportion, perspective, absolute beauty, and harmony, and at the same time he sought to represent natural phenomena with unparalleled verisimilitude.

Dürer was an engraver, painter, woodblock artist, draftsman, and designer of court pageants for his most important patron, the Emperor Maximilian. About 1500 Dürer became engrossed in the study of human proportions. The watermark on the paper of this remarkable drawing lends credence to the date of 1513, for it is a trident with circle, the trademark of a paper mill belonging to the Fugger family of Augsburg in the sixteenth century. It occurs on paper used by Dürer for his drawings and notes from about 1505 to 1515, particularly on the studies of human proportions done during those years.

Many of Dürer's numerous prints are dedicated to popular saints and were presumably utilized by a public less interested in their artistic merits than in their value as objects of devotional intercession and protection. On the other hand, some of the religious prints—such as this engraving of Saint Jerome (c.374–420), the learned church father and hermit—were clearly aimed at a class of well-



educated collectors. The saint is depicted as a contemporary of Dürer diligently at work in his sunlit study. A dozing lion lies next to a fox, symbolizing Jerome's withdrawal into the wilderness. A crucifix sits on the edge of the saint's worktable and a skull lies on the windowsill. An enormous gourd, also symbolic of the saint's withdrawal, is suspended ominously overhead, nearly in the spectator's space.

The technical accomplishments in this print are extraordinary. The light patterns that fall on the embrasures, the uneven surface of the bull's-eye glass, the texture and grain of the wood in the ceiling, and the coats of the sleeping animals have all been rendered with the utmost clarity and precision. Precise, too, is the representation of space, which has been carefully worked out from the vantage point of the entryway. *Saint Jerome in His Study* along with two other extraordinary engravings, *Melencolia I* (1514) and *Knight, Death, and the Devil* (1513), are universally accepted as the three finest prints by Dürer. The museum's collections include thirty engravings and forty-three woodcuts by this remarkably talented artist.



LUCAS CRANACH THE ELDER
German, 1472–1553

The Three Graces

Dated 1535
Oil on panel
19⁷/₈ × 14¹/₁₆ in (50.5 × 35.7 cm)
Museum purchase: acquired 1957

The Three Graces is one of three paintings by Lucas Cranach in the museum's collection. It is signed and dated in the lower left with the monogram of a winged serpent, a device granted to the artist in 1508 by Frederick the Wise, elector of Saxony. In 1500 Cranach burst onto the scene in Vienna with his excellent portraits and extraordinary religious panels. By 1504 he had become court painter to Frederick. For the next half century he would continue in the employ of three successive electors. The balance Cranach was able to bring to his personal associations was remarkable. On the one hand, he executed commissions for the court and for a church leader such as the cardinal archbishop of Mainz and Magdeburg, one of the greatest art patrons of the age, and on the other, he was Martin Luther's closest friend.

Cranach lived at a crucial time in European history. His generation witnessed the demise of the medieval world. New ideas about personal freedom allowed artists to reexamine the theme of the human body. Although painting in northern Europe developed independently of the Italian Renaissance, a few artists such as Cranach's contemporary Albrecht Dürer (plates 14 and 15) consciously sought to

bring back the ideas of the Italians to their native soil. Cranach, however, never went to Italy. Yet throughout his life he sought to decipher the essence of classical beauty. It is in the small panels of mythological subjects like *The Three Graces* that the northern Renaissance is best expressed. While the subject is classical, the spirit of the work is inspired by his northern vision. Here three nude women are arranged to provide back, front, and profile views establishing the northern canon of beauty. They are linked by a transparent veil that serves only to emphasize their nakedness. (Frequently Cranach's nudes wear large hats and jewelry in addition to transparent veils.) The female figure is treated almost as an *objet* in this minutely detailed representation. Paintings such as this were highly favored collectors' items in their day and more than one version of the subject may exist.

The Three Graces, as described by the Roman statesman and philosopher Seneca, represent the threefold aspect of generosity: giving, receiving, and reciprocation. This painting was executed in the year of Cranach's eldest son's untimely death. After this tragedy the wings on the serpent in his monogram are always lowered.



ATTRIBUTED TO GERMAIN PILON
French, 1535-1590

Saint Barbara

Marble

71 in high (180.3 cm)

Museum purchase: acquired 1949

Saint Barbara was a virgin martyr purportedly put to death during the persecutions of Maximian in the fourth century. Because of the account of her life in the *Golden Legend*, she became a very popular saint in the later Middle Ages. Although she was shut away in a tower by her father, suitors still sought her hand in marriage. Unbeknownst to her father, she converted to Christianity. When he learned of her conversion, he turned her over to a judge who condemned her to death. Her father was struck by lightning and died, and she became the patron saint of those in danger of sudden death, which by extension includes those in certain professions—such as artillerymen, miners, and firemen. Her traditional symbol is the tower, which we see in this representation complete with three windows honoring the Holy Trinity.

This elegant woman of the French court is garbed in an ermine-lined robe clasped over a clinging gown in the style of classical drapery. Her ample, yet graceful figure is characteristic of the canon of beauty espoused by the brilliant artists of the School of Fontainebleau. King Francis I, enamored of the humanist traditions of Italy, imported Italian artists, including Leonardo da Vinci, who died near Amboise, to enliven the French court. The Italian masters Primaticcio and Niccolò dell'Abbate adapted their styles so well to the elegant tastes of the French court that the result was a unique kind of Mannerism that incorporated heightened sensuality into an elaborate decorative program.

Catherine de' Medici, consort of Francis's successor, Henry II, was very fond of the work of Germain Pilon. Indeed, it has been suggested that the features of Saint Barbara bear a strong resemblance to those of Catherine. The regal bearing of this figure is enhanced by her sumptuous coiffure, embellished with a highly distinctive diadem, and by the jewelry and pearls worn on her wrists. She holds the hilt of a sword, the instrument of her death, in her right hand. However, the blade, which was probably made of metal, possibly silver, is missing. She is the epitome of the elegant courtier in the dress and pose of a Greek goddess.

Although the sculpture has been published as the work of Pilon and bears a resemblance to undisputed works by the sculptor, there is no conclusive proof that this engaging figure is the work of Germain Pilon. Stylistically, one of the works most closely related to it is a corner figure from the tomb of Henry II and Catherine de' Medici, in the cathedral of Saint-Denis outside Paris.

This impressive sculpture came to light in the 1913 sale of the renowned Eugène Kraemer collection. The creamy white marble has taken on a mellow patina. There are slight signs of erosion on the surface of the statue, which might indicate that at some time in its past it was exposed to the elements, perhaps in an exterior niche or garden bower. The figure made her debut in the museum at the opening of the west wing in April 1949. A special niche of black marble, in which she still stands, was created for her.

EL GRECO (DOMÉNIKOS THEOTÓKOPOULOS)

Spanish (born on Crete), 1541–1614

The Penitent Magdalen

c.1580–1585

Oil on canvas

40 × 32¹/₄ in (101.6 × 81.9 cm)

Museum purchase: acquired 1930

Doménikos Theotokópoulos was born at Phodele near Candia on Crete, but it was in Spain that his talent matured. Known as El Greco (the Greek), he is considered a Spanish painter. Early in his travels he studied in Italy with the Venetians. Titian and Tintoretto are reputed to have been his teachers. It is the latter who influenced his style the most. By 1577 El Greco was in Toledo, where he settled permanently and developed his signature style.

His principal subjects were religious, and he imbued his themes with profound feeling and supernatural vision. He developed a supremely personal aesthetic, characterized by cold, hard light, freely executed brushwork, and a disregard for classical proportion. His ethereal, elongated figures emphasize the spiritual content of his work.

The Magdalen is one of several religious subjects that appear repeatedly in his oeuvre. According to one legend, after the ascension of Christ, Mary Magdalen, along with her sister Martha and her brother Lazarus, set out in a boat without sails or oars. They are purported to have landed on the southern coast of France, where the three evangelized the local population of Provence. Mary lived as a hermit in the Alpes Maritimes and died at Saint-Maximin. As a repentant prostitute the Magdalen was a provocative subject for an artist who wished to present a full range of emotions. She

was an appealing symbol to Roman Catholics during the Counter-Reformation because the validity of the Sacrament of Penance, or Confession, was denied by the Protestants.

El Greco painted her as a half-length figure in a craggy, precipitous landscape. Her hands are quietly clasped. Beside her lie a skull and a jar of oil, traditional attributes of the Magdalen. Her expression betrays the rapturous vision she is experiencing. The shadowy intermingling of figure and background heightens the sense of drama. Distortions of line, color, and space are emotionally expressive, and the use of complementary colors to create shadows produces vibrant results. El Greco's vision has been particularly appealing to painters in the twentieth century. He had been virtually forgotten, eclipsed by Velázquez, until the mid-nineteenth century, when artists rediscovered him, often imbuing him with certain prophetic aesthetic qualities. But because he was long thought of as a contentious mystic, a hard-fought battle has raged over the past century to establish him in the pantheon of great European masters.

An earlier version of this subject may be seen in the Worcester (Massachusetts) Art Museum. The Magdalen is one of three paintings by El Greco in The Nelson-Atkins Museum and one of the first European paintings to enter the collections.



. 19 .

JACQUES BELLANGE
French, active 1580–1638

The Martyrdom of Saint Lucy

c.1615–1616, signed in the plate
Etching with engraving
18⁵/₁₆ × 13⁷/₈ in (46.6 × 35.2 cm)
Museum purchase: acquired 1983

Jacques Bellange, a French Mannerist artist, was given to flights of fanciful exaggeration. Bellange was one of the last exponents of Mannerism, a period of strange aesthetics between the full-blown classicism of the Renaissance and the effulgent theatricality of the Baroque. Bellange's etchings, of which only forty-eight are known, are nearly the only remnants of his large oeuvre of paintings and theatrical designs.

Saint Lucy, a wealthy Sicilian maiden who gave her goods to the poor, was denounced to the authorities by her betrothed and died in the third-century persecutions of Diocletian. In *The Martyrdom of Saint Lucy*, the saint expires amidst a sea of tormentors. Gone is the devotion to the accurate, although formulaic, representation of human proportion so important to the Renaissance aesthetic. It has

been replaced by anatomical exaggeration that teeters on the edge of absurdity. The boneless figures swoon in a distorted contrapposto that emphasizes the swirling quality of the composition. Bellange has staged the crowd masterfully and uses it cleverly to draw the viewer through the scene. We are welcomed by the gentleman at the lower right, who confronts us directly. The break in the figures leads our attention to Saint Lucy and the bending figure to her right. Finally, we exit through the fanciful classical landscape of monumental obelisks and rotunda.

Although the museum's collection contains many Mannerist prints, including examples by Parmigianino, Jacopo Caraglio, and Jacques Callot, none of them demonstrates the ornamental excesses to which the Mannerist style could surrender itself as eloquently as this essay by Bellange.



JOACHIM ANTHONISZ. WTEWAEL
Dutch (Utrecht), 1566–1638

The Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian

Signed and dated 1600

Oil on canvas

66 × 48½ in (168 × 123 cm)

Museum purchase: acquired 1984

In art historical terminology, Mannerism generally refers to a style that was in currency from roughly 1520 to the end of the sixteenth century. It is characterized by exaggerated poses, elongated figures, heightened tensions, and often unnatural colors. Generally anticlassical in intention, it is regarded as the bridge between the Renaissance and the Baroque. Until the recent acquisition of this painting, Mannerism was one of the most underrepresented areas of the museum's painting collections. Wtewael was one of the last and most important practitioners of the style.

Sebastian was a third-century Roman centurion in the service of the Emperor Diocletian. For acts of sympathy toward imprisoned Christian martyrs, Diocletian ordered him shot to death with arrows. Sebastian survived the ordeal, confronted the emperor, and was subsequently ordered beaten to death with clubs. He was buried in a cemetery on the Appian Way close to the basilica that bears his name.

In Wtewael's painting, Sebastian is being bound to a tree in preparation for his martyrdom. The subject was popular among late Renaissance and Mannerist artists, for it allowed the portrayal of a male nude in a religious context. Here we see a well-developed, yet slightly effeminate young male in almost ecstatic anticipation of his ordeal. The exaggerated

contrapposto of the body emphasizes the emotional content of the event. On the left of the composition three figures approach. One with his back turned is clearly an archer. On the right, in a clearing, is a grouping of rustic buildings. The thatched roofs belong to the Dutch, not Italian, countryside, and it is clearly the seventeenth, not the third, century.

In the foreground two burly, muscular figures tie Sebastian's legs to the tree. Their bows, crossbows, and quivers lie on the ground before them. A putto has been sent from heaven with a laurel crown and a palm frond, symbols of a Christian martyr's victory over death and his reward of eternal life. This small figure is a masterful device for extending the space of the composition into the realm of the spectator and for creating the sense of a 360-degree composition.

While the spatial arrangement, smoothly finished brushwork and high-key palette are Mannerist, the painting foretells of the impending Baroque. The use of diagonal perspectives and the agitated, swirling forms of the composition point to the stylistic developments of the succeeding period.

The painting may have been commissioned for the guild of Sebastiaandoelen, the municipal militia of archers, of which Sebastian was the patron saint.





MICHELANGELO MERISI DA CARAVAGGIO
Italian (Lombardy), 1571-1610

Saint John the Baptist

c.1604

Oil on canvas

68 $\frac{1}{4}$ × 52 in (173.4 × 132.1 cm)

Museum purchase: acquired 1952

At Conscente (Liguria) in 1596 construction began on a new church dedicated to Saint Alexander. The old church became an oratory of the Confraternità della Misericordia, whose patron saint was the Baptist. The building of the new church was financed by the Costa family, and on November 5, 1603, Ottavio Costa became its administrator. The Costa family was among Caravaggio's principal patrons. It seems likely that *Saint John the Baptist* was commissioned for the old church shortly thereafter. The late Mannerist architectural framework for this painting is still extant in the old building. Three copies of the painting exist: one is in the Museo Diocesano, Albenga; another in the sacristy of Santo Stefano, Empoli; and the third, attributed to Bartolommeo Manfredi, is at the Capodimonte, Naples.

Caravaggio took his name from the small village of his birth near Bergamo. He preferred to work in the Venetian manner, painting in oils from a live model, eschewing any lengthy preparation. Evidence of this direct technique is apparent in the painting of the Baptist in the numerous sgraffiti, or scorings, that occur throughout the composition. These incised lines made by a stylus to create the underdrawing are especially visible in the face and torso, in addition to the left leg of the figure.

This painting was made relatively late in the artist's career, when he carried out several large commissions. He brought to his work a strong pictorial vision and a new way of seeing traditional subjects, thus injecting vitality and a regenerative spirit into religious painting. At times Caravaggio's choice of models did not suit the expectations of the Church or his patrons. The young man portrayed as the Baptist is a common type, a man of the people.

The representation of John the Baptist is unconventional, for he is shown as a partly nude, melancholy, introspective

youth without a halo and without the lamb. The painter's dramatic use of chiaroscuro, or manipulation of light and dark, brilliantly emphasizes the brooding character of the figure, whose pose was inspired by ancient sculpture (particularly the *Laocoön* in the Vatican). The treatment of space is also dramatic, with the picture plane pierced by the Baptist's left knee. The diagonal of the reed cross, the only clue to the figure's ecclesiastical identity, leads the eye beyond the confines of the canvas.

The pronounced naturalism and dramatic chiaroscuro effect of Caravaggio's style exerted enormous influence. In Spain, Velázquez, before becoming court painter to Philip IV, employed dramatic lighting effects. Caravaggio's naturalism made a deep impression on Dutch painters such as Honthorst and Terbrugghen. His influence was so real that the term *Caravaggisti* is used to describe a number of young painters who went to Rome in the early years of the seventeenth century, drawn by the unorthodox method and innovative qualities of this master. The stylistic power that he wielded is all the more remarkable when we realize that he was dead by the age of thirty-nine, having succumbed to malarial fever.

In 1606 he fled from Rome after killing a man in a brawl. The last four years of his life were spent in Naples, Malta, and Sicily, where he continued to paint, but in a style quite changed from that of his Roman years.

This painting is said to have been purchased on Malta in the eighteenth century by James, the fifth Lord Aston of Forfar. It descended through Lord Aston's second daughter, Barbara, and in the 1840s was moved to Burton Constable, a holding of her husband's family, where it was discovered in the 1940s. It was sold to an English dealer in 1951 and was purchased by The Nelson-Atkins Museum the next year.

. 22 .

DIRCK VAN BABUREN
Dutch (Utrecht), c.1595-1624

Christ Crowned with Thorns

c.1622
Oil on canvas
50 × 66 in (127.5 × 168.3)
Acquired through the generosity of The William
Rockhill Nelson Trust, Mrs. Kenneth A. Spencer
Fund, and Mr. Robert Lehman (by exchange): 1984

. 23 .

BERNARDO STROZZI
Italian (Genoa), 1582-1644

Saint Cecilia

1615-1620
Oil on canvas
68 × 48¹/₄ in (172.7 × 122.6 cm)
Museum purchase: acquired 1944

. 24 .

PETER PAUL RUBENS
Flemish, 1577-1640

Battle of Constantine and Licinius

1622
Oil on panel
14 × 22¹/₂ in (35.6 × 57.2 cm)
Museum purchase: acquired 1955

. 25 .

NICOLAS POUSSIN
French, 1594-1665

Triumph of Bacchus

1635-1636
Oil on canvas
50¹/₂ × 59¹/₂ in (128.3 × 151.1 cm)
Museum purchase: acquired 1931

. 26 .

FRANCISCO DE ZURBARÁN
Spanish, 1598-1664

Entombment of Saint Catherine

c.1636-1637
Oil on canvas
78³/₄ × 52¹/₂ in (200 × 133 cm)
Museum purchase: acquired 1961

. 27 .

GIOVANNI FRANCESCO BARBIERI, CALLED IL
GUERCINO
Italian (Bologna), 1591-1666

Saint Luke Displaying a Painting of the Virgin

c.1652-1653
Oil on canvas
87 × 71 in (221 × 181 cm)
Museum purchase: acquired 1983

One of the great strengths of the museum is its collection of Baroque paintings. A good number of the Baroque paintings date from the third and fourth decades of the seventeenth century. This representative selection demonstrates both the influence of Caravaggio on painting of this time and the approaches adopted in different European schools.

Dirck van Baburen was born in Utrecht about 1595. In 1612, following in the footsteps of other northern painters, including Honthorst and Terbrugghen, he went to Rome, where he was deeply impressed by the works of Caravaggio and Bartolommeo Manfredi. By 1615 Baburen was receiving commissions in Rome, and in 1617 he was selected to

decorate the Franciscan Chapel of the Pietà in the Roman church of San Pietro in Montorio. At the time this painting was created, about 1622, he had been back in Utrecht for at least a year and was sharing a studio with Terbrugghen, who had also returned to Utrecht to become, along with Honthorst, a leading proponent of Caravaggism in the Utrecht School. Like Caravaggio, Baburen died young, when he was barely thirty years old. No more than thirty autograph pictures by this master survive.

Christ Crowned with Thorns was Baburen's last religious composition and his most important work after his return from Rome. It was executed for a Franciscan monastery in



DIRCK VAN BABUREN
Christ Crowned with Thorns



BERNARDO STROZZI
Saint Cecilia

Weert, indicating that the contacts he had enjoyed with the Franciscans in Rome continued after his return to the north. Another slightly smaller version of the painting, signed by the artist, is in the Catherijne Convent Museum in Utrecht. Although The Nelson-Atkins Museum's version is unsigned, it is undoubtedly the earlier of the two paintings.

The dramatic chiaroscuro leads the eye through the emotionally charged scene. Highlights punctuate the figures and their struggles. The figures are crowded into the picture space, indeed, the figure on the left is cropped. He and the figure with his back turned imply that space continues beyond the picture plane, one of the characteristic devices of Baroque painting.

Bernardo Strozzi's *Saint Cecilia* is a variation on the Italian Baroque. A leading painter of the Genoese School, Strozzi was influenced ultimately by Venetian—rather than Roman—painters. Eventually, he would move to Venice. This painting was made about 1615–1620, before his move. The figure of the saint is dramatically lighted in a darkened, classically inspired interior, but the emphasis is really on the details of fabric and texture. One might expect such treatment from an artist living in the northern textile manufacturing center of Italy. The palette is subtle and dominated by gray blues and wine reds.

Cecilia was a Christian martyr who lived in Rome in the third century. Very little is known about her, and much of her popularity is derived from legends. Since the sixteenth century she has been most famous as the patron saint of musicians. Here she is accompanied by her attributes, the organ and the lute, the instruments most frequently associated with her. In her right hand she holds a palm, the symbol of her martyrdom.

The Flemish artist Peter Paul Rubens was one of the greatest painters of his age. A native of Westphalia, he became a Master of the Antwerp Guild of St. Luke (the painters' guild) in 1598. In 1600 he went to Italy, where he reached his full artistic maturity. He lived in Rome until 1602, and then he entered into the service of the duke of Mantua, for whom he made many paintings, first in Spain and then in Genoa and Rome. He remained in the service of the duke until 1608, when he returned to Antwerp. While Caravaggio's influence lay in his stylistic innovations, Rubens's fame lay in his versatile abilities as artist, scholar, antiquarian, businessman, and diplomat. He is one of the extraordinary figures of the seventeenth century.

When Rubens returned to Antwerp, he naturally assumed a leadership role in the cultural community. His reputation was considerable, and his paintings were sought after in all



PETER PAUL RUBENS
Battle of Constantine and Licinius



NICOLAS POUSSIN
Triumph of Bacchus

the major cultural centers of Europe. In 1622 he visited Paris, commissioned to paint a series on the life of Marie de' Medici, wife of King Henry IV, for the Luxembourg Palace (which now hangs in the Louvre). While in Paris he also prepared this *modello*, or sketch, for one of a suite of twelve tapestries commissioned by Louis XIII. The tapestries depict scenes from the life of the Emperor Constantine.

At one time sketches for all twelve scenes were in the collection of the duke of Orléans. The companion piece to the *Battle of Constantine and Licinius*, entitled *The Defeat and Death of Maxentius*, now hangs in the Wallace Collection in London, having been purchased by the fourth Marquess of Hertford in 1856.

Physical size often bears no relationship to monumentality. This is certainly the case in this painting, which in spite of its small size evokes cinematic grandeur. Such a conception is easily translated into the grand scale of a

tapestry. As the weaving is done from behind, the *modello* is the reverse of the finished tapestry. The composition is richly inventive and convincing. One can almost hear the clashing swords, the terrified horses, and the shouting men and smell the smoke and blood. It is as close to the effect of a moving picture as art will get until the twentieth century. The sketch expresses the essence of the Baroque style, blending the figures into an overall program in which no element is truly distinct from another. The whole is more important than the individual parts.

French painters in the seventeenth century, however, followed a different piper. Nicolas Poussin's *Triumph of Bacchus*, commissioned by Cardinal Richelieu to decorate his château at Poitou, is an excellent example of their different orientation. Poussin lived most of his life in Rome, but it was the classicism of antiquity, not the drama of Caravaggio, that made the greatest impression on him.



FRANCISCO DE ZURBARÁN
Entombment of Saint Catherine

Even before his sojourn in Rome, he was drawn to Roman sculpture and the Renaissance, particularly the art of Raphael and his school. He developed a personal style that combined a classical interest in the human figure with a certain sense of restraint. Themes from ancient mythology figured frequently in his work, particularly after 1630.

In this typical painting inspired by the antique, Bacchus rides in a procession. He is drawn by centaurs and accompanied by revelers playing musical instruments and dancing. Silenus carries a branch from a grapevine, Pan plays his pipes, and Hercules carries a tripod he stole from Apollo, who crosses the heavens in his chariot. A river god with an overturned amphora reclines in the foreground. The mood is pastoral and poetic.

Gentle diagonals control the spatial arrangement of this composition, but the picture plane is not violated. The lead dancer, for example, turns so as not to lead the procession out of the composition. The painting is like a completely contained sculptural frieze. Poussin had a superb ability to choreograph figures to maximum dramatic effect within classical boundaries. Emotion is implied less by chiaroscuro and contrapposto than by gestures and facial expressions. He devoted himself to pictorial clarity and a rational unity of vision. *The Triumph of Bacchus* and its companion, *The Triumph of Pan* (now in the National Gallery in London), were taken from the Château de Richelieu in the eighteenth century. They made their way to England and remained together until 1850, when they were sold separately from the collection of Lord Ashburnham.

In the 1590s and early 1600s in Spain a generation of painters was born, including Velázquez, José de Ribera, and Zurbarán, who would bring Spanish painting to its zenith. Spain has always been somewhat isolated from the rest of Europe, and because of this the life and culture of the country has had a pronounced individuality. Zurbarán's *Entombment of Saint Catherine* is an example of this uniquely Spanish vision.

The subject was originally painted for the Chapel of Saint Catherine in the Church of San José in Seville. The church was consecrated in 1636. By 1810 the museum's painting was in the Alcázar in Seville; ultimately it was taken to France by Marshal Soult during the Napoleonic campaigns in Spain. Many seventeenth-century Spanish paintings found their way into France in a similar manner. Sales of the Soult collection took place in 1847 and 1854. The *Entombment*, however, escaped being sold and, almost a century later, was found in the family chapel. It was cleaned and lent to the Prado, where it was exhibited in 1960. It entered The Nelson-Atkins Museum a year later.

This work exemplifies the particularly religious character of Spanish painting. One might surmise Zurbarán was familiar with Caravaggio's work, particularly his later,

more severe and contemplative classical paintings. But true to the Spanish sense of individuality there is also a hint of earlier Mannerism in the cramped, diagonal arrangement of the figures. There is, in fact, no sense of earthly space, and the unearthly yellow-gold sky conveys an aura of mystery.

Saint Catherine of Alexandria was a fourth-century Christian who lived during the reign of Maxentius. She was tortured on a bladed wheel for her protests against the persecution of Christians and for her refusal to marry the emperor. Miraculously the wheel broke, but she was ordered to be beheaded. According to legend, angels appeared to carry her body to Mount Sinai. Here, angels lower her body into the tomb. The implements of her torture and execution appear beside her.

In the early 1600s Bologna, Naples, and Rome were the three most important artistic centers in Italy. The Carracci family had revitalized painting in Bologna by abandoning the Mannerist traditions. Bolognese painting of this period is characterized by richly saturated, jewellike colors and carefully delineated monumental figures. Among the Carraccis' most talented pupils were Guido Reni, Domenichino, and Giovanni Francesco Barbieri, who was called Il Guercino because of his squint. This generation included a number of lesser painters who gave character and depth to the Bolognese School. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries English connoisseurs considered the Bolognese masters to be the equals of the earlier Renaissance masters. They avidly collected their works for their burgeoning country houses. Indeed, this painting was probably acquired in the 1730s by the first Earl Spencer for his house in London. By 1750 it had been taken to the Spencers' country seat at Althorp, where it remained until it appeared on the market in 1983.

Luke, Saint Paul's "beloved physician," was popularly believed to have been a painter, and many portraits of the Virgin were ascribed to him. He became the patron saint of painters. In Counter-Reformation art the subject of Luke painting the Virgin and Child typically showed Luke displaying a finished portrait. The character of the portrait is meant to reflect an earlier, more stylized period. In fact, in this painting it is a rather precise copy of a famous Byzantine icon long venerated as an autograph work of the saint and still worshiped in the Sanctuary of the Madonna of Saint Luke, the Bolognese church built to house it.

Saint Luke Displaying a Painting of the Virgin was originally commissioned for the high altar of the church of San Francesco in Reggio Emilia on behalf of the Franciscans by Aurelio Zaneletti. It seems to have remained in place until about 1705, when the church was reconstructed and the altarpieces were put in storage or dispersed. Before the painting entered the Spencer collection, it belonged to a minor Bolognese painter, Antonio Fratacci (or Fratazzi).



GIOVANNI FRANCESCO BARBIERI, CALLED IL GUERCINO
Saint Luke Displaying a Painting of the Virgin

JAN STEEN
Dutch (Utrecht), 1626–1679
Easy Come, Easy Go
c.1665–1667
Oil on canvas
33¹/₄ × 39³/₄ in (84.5 × 101 cm)
Museum purchase: acquired 1967

In the seventeenth century Dutch art first became internationally important. Landscape and genre scenes were the subjects most highly favored by the Dutch. Jan Steen, a painter from Utrecht, was a master of genre. Yet as we have seen in the Baburen painting (plate 22), Utrecht retained certain Italianate influences and therefore was somewhat independent of the rest of Holland.

Steen studied with Jan van Goyen, a prolific landscape artist, and married the older master's daughter Margaretha, by whom he had six children. *Easy Come, Easy Go* dates from the decade after van Goyen's death and was long thought to be simply a portrait of the van Goyen and Steen families. It is now thought to be Steen's grandest rendition of the moralizing theme of "Easy Come, Easy Go." Other versions of the subject by Steen may be found in the collections at Askham Hall in Cumbria, England, and in the Boymans-van Beuningen Museum in Rotterdam. Allusions to the good life abound, which in the mid-1660s was more memory than reality for these two families, for they had both suffered severe financial reverses. Certain inscriptions

within the composition allude to these circumstances. We learn that *Musica fellit curas*, "music assuages worries," and we are admonished to *discite mori*, "learn to die." The painting over the mantel represents Porus, an Indian prince who fought gallantly against the mighty Alexander the Great. The skull on the mantel is a further notation to remind the viewer of the ephemeral nature of life.

The Dutch interior serves imaginative and symbolic ends while treating us to delightful details of the life of a wealthy bourgeois family. Tapestries line the walls, the elaborate clavichord is supported by dolphins and putti, classically inspired sculpture is arranged about the room. Even smaller details allude to wealth, like the rare and exotic lemon. Servants busy themselves in their daily tasks. In an adjacent room, a maid pours an oil dressing over a bean salad garnished with hard-boiled eggs. A lively young servant attends to the wine in the large cooler at the lower left of the scene. The placement of the players upon this stage-like interior has replaced the dynamic convolutions of figure and space evident in Italian-inspired paintings.



SEBASTIANO RICCI
Italian (Venice), 1659–1734

The Marriage at Cana

c. 1713
Oil on canvas
65 × 53 in (165.1 × 134.6 cm)
Museum purchase: acquired 1959

One of the great Venetian painters of the seventeenth century, Ricci went to England about 1712 to enter a competition for the decoration of the dome of St. Paul's Cathedral in London. He was unsuccessful in his quest, but he became a great favorite among English collectors. Many of his easel paintings are still to be found in England. *The Marriage at Cana*, in fact, has belonged to several very distinguished private collections in England. It is thought to have been purchased by the third earl of Burlington directly from the artist himself. Later, it entered the collection of the duke of Devonshire, first at Chiswick and then at Chatsworth. In 1958 it was included in a sale of items from the Chatsworth collection and came to the museum shortly thereafter.

The subject of the painting is the transformation of water into wine at the marriage feast at Cana in Galilee, the first of the miracles performed by Christ (who is dressed in magenta and blue and seated just to the right of center at the

table). His mother, Mary, sits to His right. She is in earnest conversation with her son, drawing attention to the fact that the supply of wine has been depleted. As she speaks, a servant in the lower left pours liquid from a jar. In the wine-glass silhouetted against the white tablecloth it is evident that the water has been miraculously transformed.

The party is generally unaware of the miracle. Only the gentleman seated next to the column at the left seems to grasp the meaning of the event. The artist has taken the liberty of inserting himself into the festivities: he is the corpulent observer in green behind the figure of Christ.

Ricci based his composition on an earlier version of the subject by Veronese, which now hangs in the Louvre. He scattered myriad figures through this composition of seemingly boundless space in a manner characteristic of eighteenth-century Venetian decorative painting. The entire scene is awash with shimmering color.





.30.

JAN VAN HUYSUM

Dutch, 1682–1749

Vase of Flowers

c.1720

Oil on panel

31 × 23½ in (78.7 × 59.7 cm)

Museum purchase: acquired 1932

In seventeenth-century Holland still life was a major art form, though it was sometimes overshadowed by landscape and genre painting. It was a natural subject for the Dutch painters, who specialized in keen observation of their surroundings and who shared their countrymen's passion for the cultivation of flowers. Whether this interest was enhanced by the Reformation's proscription of religious subject matter is conjecture, but no culture before or since has captured the nuances of pewter, Venetian glass, flowers, and crusts of drying bread quite the way the Dutch painters of the seventeenth century did.

Masters such as Jan van Huysum took flower painting, a specialized form of still life, to its zenith. Their passion for detail was overwhelming. The flowers are preserved for posterity along with other charms of the natural world, including butterflies, snails, and moths. The portrayal of drops of water is extraordinary. Every detail is an expression of virtuoso skill.

Often the paintings were composed by the artist from

sketches made of flowers at their height of perfection. In this way flowers of different seasons might be depicted together. Here more than twenty types of flowers can be identified. Each is fully in bloom. Indeed, some are nearly past their prime. The casually arranged flowers are placed in an Italianate vase embellished with two putti. The vase stands on a stone parapet bearing the artist's signature. The many areas of spectacular intensity are contrasted brilliantly with the intriguing, deeply shadowed passages. The meticulous, enamellike finish further enhances the impact of this extraordinary painting.

The passage of time often leaves behind telltale clues about the creation of a work of art. On the left side of the composition we observe a curious phenomenon. Van Huysum made his favorite green by combining blue and yellow pigments. But the yellow was fugitive, and over the years it has vanished, leaving only the blue behind. Some of the leaves are therefore blue, while others remain the green the artist intended.

JEAN ETIENNE LIOTARD

Swiss, 1702-1789

A Frankish Woman and Her Servant

c.1750

Oil on canvas

28½ × 22½ in (72.4 × 57.2 cm)

Museum purchase: acquired 1956

Liotard was born in Geneva, the son of a Huguenot who took refuge there after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685. He traveled extensively in his youth and in 1736, while in Italy, he became acquainted with a group of wealthy young Englishmen on the Grand Tour. Liotard was invited to join them for a visit to Constantinople. They sailed in a leisurely way through the Aegean, stopping frequently. When they reached Constantinople, Liotard was smitten by the richness of the culture. He stayed for five years (1738-1743) and adopted the dress and manner of a Turk. Subsequently, he moved to Vienna where, in an age when men were cleanshaven, his bearded visage was something of an oddity. Indeed, throughout his life he displayed a strongly developed sense of individuality.

He is perhaps best known for his pastels, a medium in which he was an undisputed master. As a portrait painter he was very much in demand, often enticing his sitters to adopt an oriental costume, as with the Frankish woman (a

European woman from the Levant) in this painting. Liotard was the forerunner of those Romantic painters specializing in orientalized subjects who gained great favor in the nineteenth century. But whereas many of the Romantic escapists of the ensuing period treated oriental subjects from the vantage point of their own cultural superiority, this was not the case with Liotard, who always imparted a genuine sense of curiosity and attention to detail inspired by an exotic, little-known culture.

The Ottoman world was famous for the sumptuous textiles it produced, and Liotard vividly portrayed the rich fabrics of the woman's garments. These contrast with the more simple dress of her servant. Attention has also been paid to the oriental pattens with the double heel, the long *chibouk*, or smoking pipe, the henna-dyed fingertips, and the coffeepot and comb on the tray held by the servant.

Three slightly smaller autograph versions of the same subject in pastel exist in Swiss collections.





NICOLAS DE LARGILLIERRE

Augustus the Strong, Elector of Saxony and King of Poland

.32.

NICOLAS DE LARGILLIERRE
French, 1656-1746

*Augustus the Strong,
Elector of Saxony and King of Poland*

c.1714
Oil on canvas
57½ × 45½ in (146.1 × 115.6 cm)
Museum purchase: acquired 1954

.33.

HYACINTHE RIGAUD
French, 1659-1743

Portrait of Samuel Bernard

1727
Black chalk with white chalk highlights on blue paper
22⅛ × 16¼ in (56.2 × 41.3 cm)
Museum purchase: acquired 1966

.34.

JOSEPH SIFFREIN DUPLESSIS
French, 1725-1802

Portrait of Mme Freret Dericour

1769
Oil on canvas
32 × 25½ in (81.3 × 64.8 cm)
Museum purchase: acquired 1953

.35.

ELISABETH LOUISE VIGÉE LE BRUN
French, 1755-1842

*Portrait of Marie Gabrielle de
Gramont, Duchess of Caderousse*

Signed and dated 1784
Oil on oak panel
41⅜ × 29⅞ in (105 × 76 cm)
Acquired through the generosity of Mrs. Rex L.
Diveley; Mary Barton Stripp Kemper and Rufus Crosby
Kemper, Jr., in memory of Mary Jane Barton Stripp and
Enid Jackson Kemper; The Nelson Gallery Foundation;
Mrs. Herbert O. Peet; Mrs. George Reuland through
the W. J. Brace Charitable Trust; the Estate of Helen F.
Spencer (by exchange): 1986

The aristocracy, not the royalty, dominated France in the eighteenth century. In the first half of the century morals seemed to relax and an elegant superficiality and frivolity characterizes much of the art of this period. In this indulgent urban society the fashionable portrait came into vogue. Sitters could choose to be portrayed as themselves or as fanciful characters, as humble in origin or as lofty as the mythological gods and goddesses.

Although he enjoyed a considerable reputation as a history painter, Largillierre is perhaps best remembered for his portraits. By the 1680s he was one of the leading portraitists in Paris, along with Hyacinthe Rigaud. His output was prodigious. He was born in Paris, but he spent his early years in Antwerp, and at the age of eighteen he went to London as an assistant to the renowned court painter Sir

Peter Lely, under whom he perfected his portrait style. He returned to France in 1682 to become one of the two most important portrait painters of his time. His early years in Antwerp had engendered in him a singularly brilliant technique and love of color that distinguished his work from other French painters of his period.

In his portrait of Augustus the Strong, who was king of Poland, elector of Saxony, and grandson of the king of Denmark, the subject points with pride to a smoldering city that has been laid waste by his armies. His military exploits were impressive, and he chose to be portrayed in full armor, wearing the Order of the Elephant, a Danish honor. Historically, however, Augustus is more important as a collector of Chinese porcelains and builder of Rococo palaces and churches in Dresden than as a general. He was in fact the



HYACINTHE RIGAUD
Portrait of Samuel Bernard



JOSEPH DUPLESSIS
Portrait of Mme Freret Dericour

founder of the Meissen porcelain factory, which opened in 1710 under the directorship of Johann Friedrich Boettger.

Largillier's friend and rival was Hyacinthe Rigaud, the outstanding court painter in the last years of the reign of Louis XIV. His portrait of the king, finished in 1701, set the obligatory tone of the court portrait for some time to come. Rigaud here presents Samuel Bernard, famed French financier and son of a painter and engraver, in the appropriate court regalia. The painting after which this drawing was made is now in Versailles. (The drawing itself was a preparatory work for an engraving, an example of which is in the museum.)

Bernard is surrounded by the opulent trappings of his position as a banker and merchant. The globe and ships allude to his far-reaching enterprises. He sits in an elegant chair, his arm resting on an impressive table. His rich garments and the grand velvet curtain have taken on a life of their own as they swirl about his seated figure. Like the shell and scroll ornament of the furniture, the interlaced elements of the chair's stretcher and the ornate balustrade are in the florid, heavily ornamented style popular during the reign of Louis XIV.

The *Portrait of Mme Freret Dericour* was long attributed to François Hubert Drouais. Conclusive evidence now indicates that this attribution was incorrect: the painting was exhibited in the Salon of 1769, along with nine other works by Duplessis; and in a handlist of the Salon illustrated by Gabriel de Saint-Aubin, a quick sketch of the work is found alongside the entry for the *Portrait of Mme Freret Dericour*. It matches the painting exactly.

However, little more is known of the sitter than her name. She is seated comfortably in her surroundings, her dog keeping a wary eye on the viewer. Only hints are given of the setting—described by a portion of a marble mantel and its Neoclassical garniture. Yet the woman and her dog, a

newly fashionable Japanese spaniel, sit amidst an abundance of luxury. Fur, silk, Brussels lace, pearls, marble, and the silken coat of the dog convey an atmosphere of perfumed luxury and ease. The very essence of eighteenth-century aristocratic femininity sits before us. Portraits such as this and the one of Samuel Bernard become in themselves symbols of aristocratic life in the rich ambience of the eighteenth century.

The engaging portrait of Marie Gabrielle de Gramont (née de Sinéty) was painted for the sitter, who died in Paris about 1823. It remained in her family until it was sold at the Hôtel Drouot in Paris in November 1984. The duchess is shown three-quarter length, dressed as a shepherdess. She appears to have just returned from gathering fruit, as her basket is filled to overflowing with peaches and grapes. She is slightly flushed from her exertion. Her hair is loose and unpowdered, a voluminous straw hat frames her head, and a diaphanous scarf cascades over her shoulders. The colors of her costume are bold against the blue of the background. This portrait was completed in 1784 and was shown at the Salon of 1785 to much acclaim. Indeed, it became one of the artist's most celebrated works.

Vigée Le Brun, along with her contemporary, Adélaïde Labille-Guiard, was an extraordinarily popular portrait painter. Her professional heyday was in the years before the Revolution. In 1781 she traveled to the Netherlands and was impressed by the portraits of Rubens and van Dyck. Before her Dutch trip she had become painter to Marie Antoinette, whose portrait she first did in 1778. She is purported to have painted the queen as many as twenty-five times. Vigée Le Brun's membership in the Académie Royale came as a direct result of the intervention of Marie Antoinette. When the Revolution threatened, the painter went to Italy. She spent the next twelve years in exile, traveling throughout Europe, including Russia, before returning to Paris in 1802.



ELISABETH LOUISE VIGÉE LE BRUN
Portrait of Marie Gabrielle de Gramont, Duchess of Caderousse

AUGUSTIN PAJOU
French, 1730-1809

Bust of Jean-François Ducis

1779

Terra-cotta, mounted on a white marble socle

30 1/2 in high, including socle (78 cm)

Acquired with the assistance of the McGreevy Family
through the Westport Fund and unrestricted Nelson
Gallery Foundation Funds in honor of the Fiftieth
Anniversary of The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art:

1983

During the reign of Louis XVI, Augustin Pajou became one of the most successful and prolific artists in France. Working principally as a portraitist and sculptor, he could immortalize the important men and women of France in highly classicized fashion, *à la grecque*, or more naturalistically as in this portrait of Jean-François Ducis, a poet and playwright who rose to prominence under Louis XVI. Ducis adapted and produced many of Shakespeare's plays, among them *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *King Lear*. They were enormously successful. Because of his success, Ducis was retained by the royal family as secretary to the count of Provence, the younger brother of Louis XVI. Upon the death of Voltaire in 1778, Ducis was elected to assume the vacancy left in the Académie Française by the older writer's death. Membership in the academy was limited to forty members. It was to commemorate Ducis's election that Pajou created this portrait.

Although clearly naturalistic in its treatment, the bust is also highly romanticized and somewhat casual. Such an intimate representation was particularly suitable for the portrayal of a close friend. The bust is executed in terra-cotta, and no casts, replicas, or copies are known to exist. The medium is wonderfully responsive and very appropriate for representing a variety of textures. The lifelike quality of the figure is enhanced by the treatment of the mouth, which is slightly open, the raised eyebrow, and the tilt of the head, which seems to have been caught in mid-glance.

The bust was first exhibited at the Salon of 1779, and according to the accompanying catalog handlist was already mounted on its white marble socle and inscribed, "Jean-François Ducis, one of the forty of the Académie Française, Secretary to the brother of the King." For most of the twentieth century the bust remained in the possession of a French family. It was sold at public auction in 1982.



JEAN-FRANÇOIS DUCIS, L'UN DES QUARANTE
DE L'ACADÉMIE FRANÇOISE, SECRÉTAIRE
ORDINAIRE DE MONSIEUR FRÈRE DU ROI.



.37.

FRANÇOIS BOUCHER

French, 1703–1770

Landscape with a Water Mill

1740

Oil on canvas

49³/₄ × 63 in (126.4 × 160 cm)

Museum purchase: acquired 1959

François Boucher possessed great inventiveness, verve, and an endlessly fertile imagination, which served him well as a fashionable painter and master of interior decoration in the middle of the eighteenth century in France. Boucher is rarely thought of as a landscape painter, although landscapes frequently appear in the backgrounds of his mythological and pastoral subjects. In the elegant and grand *Landscape with a Water Mill* Boucher made no attempt to represent nature truthfully, rather he relied upon his inventive vision to create a picturesque, stagelike vista. On the left of the painting is an old mill, not unlike one known to have been in the region of the artist's home near Beauvais. In the distance, on a rise in the landscape, is a classical temple similar in form to the Temple of the Sybil at Tivoli. Boucher combined the real with the ideal to create a poetic, arcadian vision of nature.

Both the mill and the temple are in ruins. In the work of Boucher, the past, particularly the distant past, is viewed with nostalgia, so that the temple, because of its age and ruined state, expresses stronger spiritual and emotional statements than a structure completed by contemporaries. This landscape was exhibited at the Salon in 1740 and 1741.

Its pendant in the latter Salon was *The Forest*, now in the collection of the Louvre. These two paintings are among Boucher's most rare and beautiful works and were painted shortly after his first datable landscape, *The Mill of Quiquengrogne at Charenton* of 1739.

Boucher spent four years in Rome (1727–1731) learning from the Italian masters of decoration. Soon after his return to France he associated himself with the Beauvais tapestry factory, where he became a designer. In 1755 he became director of the Gobelins tapestry factory. He was the favorite artist of Madame de Pompadour and painted her portrait several times. Every phase of decoration fell within his purview. He executed great decorative schemes for the royal châteaux of Versailles and Fontainebleau, as well as masterful stage sets for the opera. In fact, in the next century the more scientifically minded English painter John Constable chided Boucher's "pastorality of the opera house." Boucher's charming facility and his wish to improve upon nature, which Constable considered "too green and badly lit," perfectly suited the French painter's skills for decoration, which in turn perfectly suited the taste of the period.

.38.

GASPARE TRAVERSI
Italian (Naples), active 1749–1776

The Arts: Music

c.1760

Oil on canvas

59⁵/₈ × 80³/₈ in (151.4 × 204.2 cm)

Gift of the Samuel H. Kress Foundation
to the Nelson Gallery Foundation: 1961

The tradition of genre painting was particularly strong in northern European art. By the end of the sixteenth century some inroads into this monopoly had been made in Italy by the Carracci family and to a certain extent by Caravaggio. By the eighteenth century there was widespread interest in Italy in the depictions of scenes from everyday life. In Venice, Pietro Longhi portrayed scenes from middle-class life, and in Naples Gaspare Traversi did the same, as we see in *The Arts: Music*.

In this large painting a young lady is seated at the harpsichord. She is accompanied by a flutist and a contrabassist. The trio's efforts are being enjoyed by six admiring gentlemen. Most of the scrutiny and attention, of course, is being lavished upon the young lady. We see from the music that the composition is for a single voice, *cantata a voce sola*. The following lyrics may be read from the music: "The beautiful Aurora arises and gilds the beautiful meadows and renders . . ."

Although this painting and its companion, *The Arts: Drawing*, also in the museum's collection, are allegories of

the arts, they provide very important documentary evidence of the social milieu of eighteenth-century Naples. These canvases, once part of the Samuel H. Kress Collection, are among the largest of Traversi's lively genre scenes.

The paintings afford a view of Traversi's process of compositional decision-making. He changed his mind on several occasions in the course of work on this scene. The old gentleman delightedly turning the pages of the music originally stood more erect, perhaps keeping time with the rolled-up sheet of music which he holds in his hand like a baton. A ghost of this previous posture appears behind him. Often opaque pigment was used to cover up these pimenti, but over time this pigment became transparent and the lower layers of pigment began to show through, revealing the original arrangement.

Genre painting allows personalities to be explored—often with mildly amusing results. Traversi has treated this scene with great wit and observation, and he signed the work in large, flowery script at the lower left.





.39.

ATTRIBUTED TO JOHANN JOACHIM KRETZSCHMAR
(MODELER)

German, 1677-1740; Meissen Porcelain Factory,
Meissen, Germany, established 1710 (manufacturer)

*Augustus the Strong,
Elector of Saxony and King of Poland*

c.1715-1720

Porcelain

4³/₈ in high (11.1 cm)

Museum purchase: acquired 1984

.40.

ATTRIBUTED TO IGNAZ PREISSLER
German, 1676-1741

Attilius Regulus Battling the African Serpent

c.1720-1725

Chinese porcelain with painting

8¹/₂ in diameter (21.6 cm)

Acquired through the generosity
of Mr. and Mrs. Earl D. Wilberg: 1985

.41.

VINCENNES PORCELAIN FACTORY
(Vincennes, France, established 1740)

Tankard (pot à boire)

c.1753

Porcelain

6 in high (15.3 cm)

Museum purchase: acquired 1984

.42.

SCEAUX POTTERY AND PORCELAIN FACTORY,
JACQUES CHAPELLE PERIOD
(Sceaux, France, established before 1748)

Soup Tureen, Cover, and Stand

c.1755

Faïence

Tureen and cover 11⁵/₈ × 14 in (30 × 35.5 cm);
stand 18 in long (45.5 cm)

Museum purchase: acquired 1983

Porcelain, the most refined of all ceramic materials, was an invention of the Chinese in the eighth century A.D., but it was not until 1709 that Johann Friedrich Boettger of Dresden discovered the secret of hard-paste porcelain in Europe. The Meissen firm was established the next year under the patronage of Augustus the Strong (1670-1733), elector of Saxony (1694-1733) and king of Poland (1697-1707 and 1709-1733).

This rare example of Augustus in contemporary armor, quite similar to the Largillier portrait (plate 32), is one of the most important pieces of late Baroque sculpture in the museum's collection. It was executed in the first decade of porcelain manufacture in Europe, about the same time as the Largillier portrait. Augustus wears full parade dress,

complete with armor, an ermine-lined robe, and a marshal's baton in his right hand. The figure is one of the most original creations of the Meissen factory's early years.

It has recently been determined that this piece and another model of Augustus in the guise of a Roman emperor were created for a chess set ordered by Augustus but never completed. The few pieces that were made were sold merely as ornamental wares and their decoration varies greatly. Of the eight known examples of this figure, one is decorated with gilding and enameling, another is silvered and polychromed. In the museum's version the armor is highlighted by gilding. The figure not only occurs in porcelain examples but also in unpolished reddish brown stoneware produced by Meissen about 1730. The bases vary



IGNAZ PRESSLER

Attilius Regulus Battling the African Serpent



Tankard (pot à boire)

from figure to figure; some are quite high, unlike the treatment here.

The two versions of Augustus in German and Roman dress are attributed to Johann Joachim Kretzschmar, the Dresden sculptor responsible for two large-scale sculptures of the same subject. In the eighteenth century the division between practitioners of the major arts of architecture, painting, and sculpture and those of the "minor" decorative arts was not quite as distinct as it later became. Many of the most important artists of the time designed or modeled wares for the great porcelain factories.

Four of the eight versions of the subject are in Britain; two in the Royal Collection at Buckingham Palace and two in the Devonshire family collection at Chatsworth in Derbyshire. Of the eight examples, the museum's version is one of the most crisply detailed, indicating that it came from a fresh mold or that an expert repairer worked on the biscuit after it was molded and before it was gilded. The figure itself is in remarkable condition, having undergone no restoration whatsoever, and has only a slight chip on the robe that cascades over the armor.

In spite of European developments, hard-paste porcelain from China was still cheaper than the Continental product. Oriental wares therefore continued to be imported into Europe even after the discovery of 1709. In the *hausmaler* dish by Ignaz Preissler, for example, a Chinese export piece has been decorated by a German painter.

The dish, painted in blackish brown enamel, shows the Roman Consul Attilius Regulus battling a giant serpent, which represents the Carthaginians of Africa, Rome's great enemy. Regulus was a consul in 267 B.C. and again in 256 B.C. He won an important naval battle at Ecnomus that made possible the Roman invasion of Egypt. Although many times victorious over the Carthaginians, he was defeated by them in 255 B.C. The scene is identified on the reverse of the dish by a superbly painted inscription in Latin: "The Roman Consul Attilius Regulus, at last a victor, has overcome by means of the bow, the dart, the spear, and the javelin, with much slaughter of his own men, the African serpent, menacing because of its vibrating tongue and terrifying because of its circular movement." As was common practice, the subject had been copied from an engraving, in this case from one published in Antwerp in 1578. The adaptation of the rectangular engraved subject onto the circular, slightly concave surface is masterful.

The term *hausmaler* literally means "home painter." It describes quite precisely the circumstances of the decoration of such wares. Free-lance German painters enameled faience and china blanks, which were then glazed and fired. By the eighteenth century these wares were largely a product for the court. The city of Augsburg and the provinces of Silesia and Bohemia were the main centers for this activity.

In both Silesia and Bohemia painters exploited the technique of *schwarzlot*, or painting in blackish enamel. Such a technique had been common on German faience and glass in the seventeenth century. By the 1760s the tradition of *hausmalerei* was on the wane because of the spread of porcelain manufacture throughout Europe.

Although no known pieces are signed by Ignaz Preissler, many peculiarities of style corroborate the attribution of this piece to him. His vigorous horses are idiosyncratic. They have ample hindquarters, prominent joints, and bulging eyes. The folds of his drapery are stiff, and he had a penchant for scratching through wet enamel to create a delicate linear detail. From 1719 to 1726 Preissler was employed by a very important Silesian patron. During this time he executed only "gray on gray or black paintings." The decorations were often of "poetic subjects painstakingly executed." Painstaking execution certainly is evident in the museum's dish.

In France the Vincennes porcelain factories were the forerunners of modern-day Sèvres. They were established in 1740 and enjoyed the early involvement of Louis XV. Between 1745 and 1756, as a result of this royal patronage, the factory experienced a period of great artistic and technical creativity. The tankard, designed to hold beer or some other alcoholic beverage, was executed during this vital period in the factories' history. It is designed with exquisitely gilded pictorial reserves on a mottled cobalt ground. The scenes of birds flying and walking among bullrushes, weeping willows, palms, and other flora express the playful, feminine qualities of the eighteenth-century Rococo style.

Although the tankard's intended function was mundane, its elegant decoration indicates that it was as much a status symbol as a piece of tableware. Indeed, Vincennes porcelain was very fashionable among the members of Louis XV's court.

Unlike porcelain, faience is earthenware partly baked and coated with an opaque white glaze containing tin oxide. The white surface is especially effective for enhancing the decorative pattern, over which a clear lead glaze is added before the final firing. An invention of Asia, it spread to Spain and then to Europe. During the eighteenth century superior faience was produced in France, particularly in the north around Rouen.

The exuberantly modeled soup tureen, cover, and stand are excellent examples of the work at Sceaux, a small factory just outside Paris, between Sèvres and Mennecy. The cover of the tureen is surmounted by a putto removing an arrow from the mouth of a snarling dragon. The handles are modeled in the form of winged dragons. Faience made under the direction of Jacques Chappelle was as delicate and finely painted as porcelain.



Soup Tureen, Cover, and Stand

RALPH TOFT
English, Staffordshire

Mermaid Dish

c.1660–1680, signed
Lead-glazed earthenware
18 in diameter (45.7 cm)

The Frank P. and Harriet C. Burnap Collection of
English Pottery: acquired 1941

In 1941 Mr. and Mrs. Frank P. Burnap gave to The Nelson-Atkins Museum the core of a collection of English pottery that has now grown to over eleven hundred items. The Burnaps carefully accumulated specimens of all of the principal wares of early English pottery, as well as many of the lesser-known types, so that it is possible to study the complete history of English pottery within this collection. The Burnaps' quest for high-quality objects lasted more than thirty years and their comprehensive collection represents the first major gift to the people of Kansas City after the original bequests established the museum and its collections.

The great strength of the collection lies in its seventeenth- and eighteenth-century wares, with particular emphasis on slipware and English delftware. More than sixty pieces are slipware, half of which are large chargers or plates like this mermaid dish. There are one hundred and four pieces of delftware in the collection.

To create the mermaid dish a bat of coarse, porous, buff-colored clay was rolled out rather like a piecrust and formed on an inverted mold. It was then allowed to dry sufficiently until it could be removed from the mold and handled with-

out damaging the shape of the dish. Because the clay was of poor quality and uninteresting color, a liquid slip of white pipe clay was poured into the plate and manipulated until it covered the entire surface. This was allowed to dry. On this surface the design of the mermaid, her hair, the potter's name, and the dexter-slanting part of the trellis border were trailed using a pipette filled with a slip of red clay that would fire brown. The sinister-slanted trellis and other parts of the design were applied in the same fashion. Then a slip to which an oxide of iron or antimony had been added was applied, most probably by brush. When fired this would impart an orange brown color, such as we see in the body of the mermaid. Finally, a pipette of white slip was prepared by which the small dots or "jewels" were added to highlight the trailed slip. Over all of this a transparent, yellow-tinted lead glaze was added by dusting powdered galena over the surface. This natural sulfide of lead melted during the firing. The back of the dish is unglazed and undecorated.

This impressive creation from rough local materials demonstrates a unique approach to decoration quite unlike that found in the highly refined and more elegant porcelains of the Continent in the eighteenth century.



PAUL DE LAMERIE
English, 1688–1751

Footed Cup and Cover

1737
Silver

14½ in high (36.8 cm); 6½ in diameter (16.5 cm)
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph S. Atha: 1954

Although born in Holland of Huguenot parents, Paul de Lamerie became the best-known English silversmith of his time, and some of the finest pieces of English Rococo silver came from his workshop. His family left their homeland for France in the 1680s and by 1691 had settled in London. In August 1703 de Lamerie was apprenticed to Pierre Platel, a French Huguenot silversmith who had become a member of the London Goldsmith's Company in 1699. Made a freeman of the City of London in February 1712, de Lamerie registered his mark and opened his shop in Windmill Street where he remained until 1738. In 1716 he was appointed goldsmith to the king.

By the 1730s de Lamerie was producing cast and embossed plate in a highly individualized version of the Rococo style. This design by de Lamerie for a two-handled covered cup is known in three versions executed between 1737 and 1739. A gilded version belongs to the Fishmongers' Company in London. The general appearance of the cup is Rococo, but many of the decorative motifs come from

earlier sources. The body resembles an inverted bell pierced by writhing serpents whose smoothly scaled, crisply defined bodies serve as handles for the cup. The more fluid decorations on the cover, like the lion mask, and, to a certain extent, those of the foot, are reminiscent of the auricular style favored by Dutch seventeenth-century silversmiths such as the van Vianen family. In this style the silver is so smoothly and fluidly modeled that it appears almost molten. The guilloche band ornamenting the central panel of the body comes from classical architectural ornament, perhaps by way of late seventeenth-century French pattern books.

Frederick, prince of Wales and heir apparent to George II, was an important force in molding Rococo taste in England. He favored designs such as this cup. De Lamerie was himself a dominant influence in determining English Rococo silver styles from the mid-1730s on, and his death in 1751 contributed to the decline of the Rococo style in England.





. 45 .

CHARLES CRESSSENT
French, 1685-1768

Cartel Clock Case

C. 1747
Gilded bronze and wood marquetry body
46 × 21 in (116.8 × 53.3 cm)
Museum purchase: acquired 1962

. 46 .

CHARLES CRESSSENT
French, 1685-1768

Commode

C. 1745-1749
Kingwood veneer, red marble, and ormolu mounts
35³/₄ × 63³/₁₆ × 24⁵/₈ in (90.8 × 16.5 × 62.5 cm)
Museum purchase: acquired 1965

Charles Cressent was a sculptor and leading furniture maker of the Regency and early Rococo periods in France. He learned his skills from his grandfather, who was an *ébéniste*, and his father, who was a sculptor. An *ébéniste* was a cabinetmaker who specialized in veneered furniture, as opposed to a *menuisier*, who was a joiner specializing in carved pieces in plain woods and more characteristically made chairs and beds. This professional distinction was maintained until the Revolution. From the beginning of his career, Cressent seems to have practiced as a decorative sculptor. Indeed, he was elected to the Académie de Saint-Luc in Paris as a sculptor in 1714. In 1719, however, he married the widow of Joseph Poitou, *ébéniste* to the duke of Orléans, the regent. This alliance proved useful for he completed a large amount of work for three succeeding dukes of Orléans, a number of princes, as well as several members of the French aristocracy.

Of all of his works, the clock cases come the closest to pure sculpture. The cartel clock was especially popular in France during the Rococo period, and Cressent was responsible for some of the finest examples to have come down to us. A cartel clock is designed to hang on a wall and takes its name from the *cartel*, or point, at the bottom of the

case. Cressent's clock appears to be made completely of gilded bronze; the sides, however, are composed of wood marquetry. This is an important distinction because, in the highly regulated furniture-makers' guild, Cressent was licensed to supply mounts for furniture, but not to make a clock entirely of gilt bronze. Early in his career Cressent had had trouble with the law over this fine distinction.

Gilt bronze, or ormolu, was obtained by mercury gilding. In this dangerous and expensive process an amalgam of gold and mercury is applied to the finely chiseled cast bronze, which is then fired in a low-temperature oven so that the highly noxious mercury will be driven off, leaving a thin film of gold. The process is repeated several times until a thick surface is obtained that can be burnished.

In the museum's example the figure of Time wielding a scythe surmounts the face of the clock, while Love sports about below, having laid aside his quiver. Love raises his hand to ward off the encroaching Time. Love is triumphant over Time, a particularly appropriate theme for the court of Louis XV. All of this occurs in a mass of flowers, foliage, and C-scrolls, whose details are highly refined and precise. Several versions of such a clock by Cressent exist.



The commode is made of inlaid veneers of kingwood, surmounted by a red marble top, and embellished with ormolu mounts. *Commode* is a French term for a chest of drawers. Its meaning in English applies more specifically to a chest that is perhaps more decorative than functional. It became more popular than taller chests, which did not fit so harmoniously with the dado-embellished interiors of the eighteenth century.

The front of this example has been treated as a single decorative unit. There are two drawers, but for decorative reasons the upper one is supported on interior runners rather than on a visible shelf. The overlay of ormolu also helps to unify the facade. The decorative program of the ormolu, composed primarily of shell and foliate motifs, enlivens the surface and becomes decidedly three-dimensional in order to function as drawer pulls. The twining vine with tiny clusters of grapes ascending from the feet is quite unusual for the Regency period. The commode itself grace-

fully bows and curves. Such undulations of form, combined with the serpentine quality of the ormolu, imbue the piece with a lively, organic quality. The ormolu mounts are applied with screws that are visible. Such attachments allowed each piece of furniture to be easily cleaned and maintained with the high degree of polish required by the taste of the period.

Because *ébénistes* were not obliged to stamp their furniture until 1751, many objects have been attributed to Cressent with little substantive evidence to support the attributions. Moreover, most of Cressent's pieces are not stamped, but serendipitous circumstances have allowed us to identify many of the pieces made by the master. Cressent was an avid art collector. This passion often brought him to the brink of disaster, and he was forced to sell his inventory at various times throughout his life. It is in these inventory lists that Cressent described his items in remarkable detail and subsequently allowed us to identify them.

BERNARD II VAN RISENBURGH
French, c.1700–1765

Secrétaire en pente

c.1750

Marquetry veneer of tulipwood and kingwood with
ormolu mounts

34 × 34½ × 15¾ in (86.4 × 87.6 × 40 cm)

Acquired through the Kenneth A. and Helen F. Spencer
Foundation Acquisition fund: 1972

The van Risenburgh family represented three generations of *ébénistes*. Bernard II is the most well known and seems to have worked almost exclusively for Parisian dealers, or *marchands-merciers*, who in the highly regulated world of Parisian guilds dealt in furniture and various kinds of works of art. They were forbidden from having their own workshops and were obliged to patronize independent craftsmen. In the eighteenth century they were concentrated in the Saint-Honoré quarter of Paris, as many of their present-day counterparts still are. Through these dealers van Risenburgh's furniture was supplied to Louis XV, Madame de Pompadour, and numerous private clients in France and other parts of the Continent.

This lady's writing desk has a sloping hinged lid and top,

and its sides are inlaid with a radiating grid pattern enclosing quartered squares. It is enhanced with ormolu mounts. Until 1957 this master was known only by the initials BVRB, with which he stamped his pieces. This piece is stamped underneath the back rail. Small *secrétaires* of this elegant design were in great favor with the court and many similar examples are extant. The inside is delicately inlaid and possesses two drawers and a secret compartment. *Secrétaire* is the French term for a writing desk in which papers could be kept secret, hidden, and locked away. This particular form might be identified with the *secrétaire en pente*, a free-standing desk whose lid, supported by hinges when open, provides a surface for writing as well as a means for keeping the contents of the desk secret when closed.



ADAM WEISWEILER

German, active in Paris, master 1778–after 1810

Commode à vantaux

Ormolu mounts attributed to Pierre Gouthière, French, 1732–1813

c.1785–1790

Oak veneered with ebony and mahogany,

incorporating Japanese lacquer

38³/₄ × 58¹/₄ × 24 in (98.4 × 148 × 61 cm)

Acquired through the Kenneth A. and Helen F. Spencer

Foundation Acquisition Fund: 1970

This *commode à vantaux*, a chest of drawers with doors in front of the drawers, is veneer over oak with ebony and mahogany and inset with three panels of black and gold Japanese lacquer, each of which is framed with a wide border of aventurine lacquer. Aventurine lacquer is often created by lacquering over minute clippings of gold wire or copper crystals.

The central horizontal lacquer panel is flanked on either side by an upright one. The two panels on the right are hinged together and open as a single unit. An almost identical cabinet can be found in the Wrightsman collection at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. These two examples may have formed a suite of furniture with two drop-front *secrétaires*, also in the Wrightsman collection, and a *bureau à cylindre* in private hands. The caryatids embellishing the corners were a favorite motif of Weisweiler's. Again, according to the stringent guild system, labor was divided

between the *ébéniste* and, in this case, the *fondeur-doreur*, who cast and gilded the ormolu mounts that were applied to the cabinet. These craftsmen in turn worked for the *marchand-mercier*. Weisweiler's dealer is thought to have been Dominique Daguerre. The ormolu mounts may have been the work of Pierre Gouthière. Gouthière seldom signed his work but it is quite certain that he collaborated with Weisweiler.

In addition to the extraordinary craftsmanship of this piece, it is remarkable to consider that it was made at the time of the Revolution. Weisweiler managed to survive the Revolution, although much of his work had been commissioned by royal patrons. Wealthy Russian clients continued to commission furniture from the Parisian *marchands-merciers* after 1789. In the early years of the Empire, Weisweiler sought and won the patronage of the new rulers, the Bonapartes.





. 49 .

High Chest of Drawers

American, from Philadelphia, c.1760-1785

Mahogany

100½ in high (255.3 cm)

Museum purchase: acquired 1933

Known popularly as a highboy, this uniquely American variant of an English form of a chest on a chest was introduced about 1700 and was especially popular in Philadelphia. This particular example is a chest of drawers on a tablelike base that is itself fitted with drawers. It is further embellished with cabriole legs terminating in a claw-and-ball foot, a stunning broken pediment, and elegant flame finials.

Nearly eight and one-half feet high, this chest is too tall for the average modern home. In the absence of closets, such a piece was designed to hold clothing and other textiles. In England the form was popular until it was superseded by the wardrobe. Such chests were often accompanied by lowboys and were installed mainly in bedrooms and occasionally in formal parlors. Philadelphia was the greatest center for the production of such elaborately detailed furniture.

As Philadelphia's beginnings were closely linked to refugees from religious persecution, artisans rather than adventurers settled there. Joiners were abundant, and as wealth began to pour into the area in exchange for commodities, they were kept busy with numerous commissions for highly refined pieces of furniture—a testament to the elegant taste and sophistication that informed Philadelphian craftsmen between 1750 and 1790. Pedimented highboys and chests on chests of such height and treatment are purely American in form.

JOHN CONSTABLE
English, 1776–1837

The Dell at Helmingham Park

1830

Oil on canvas

44⁵/₈ × 51¹/₂ in (113.3 × 130.8 cm)

Museum purchase: acquired 1955

Constable spent the summer of 1800 in his native Suffolk at Helmingham Park, the residence of his early patrons, the earl and countess of Dysart. A drawing dated July 23, 1800, records the essentials of the scene in this painting of the dell in Helmingham Park. There would ultimately be as many as four versions of the subject, this example being the last. A large oil sketch of the subject from 1823 is in the collection of the Louvre.

This particular painting has a fascinating history. It was created to compensate the owner of *Boat Passing a Lock*, one John Carpenter, for Constable took that painting back to exhibit it as a reception piece at the Royal Academy in 1829. But Constable liked *The Dell* so much that he reneged on his agreement and kept it as well. It was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1830 and remained with the artist until his death. It was included among the items in his estate sale in 1838. Along with his contemporary J. M. W. Turner, Const-

able was the most important landscape painter in the history of nineteenth-century painting in England. Painted as a direct and immediate vision of nature, this landscape anticipated by fifty years the interests of the French Impressionists.

Avoiding the cotton-candy atmosphere of Boucher's imagined landscapes, Constable filled his canvases with the majestic elements of nature as it is. Venerable trees, a watering cow, vigilant deer, a burbling stream fill the entire composition. Nature is the subject, not a backdrop. Constable eschewed the highly finished technique of his predecessors for a flickering, dabbed surface that itself catches light, enhancing his ability to represent atmospheric qualities. However, the forms of nature were not yet as dematerialized as they would become in the hands of the Impressionists, for whom light was the sole subject of a painting.



CLAUDE MONET

French, 1840-1926

Boulevard des Capucines, Paris

1873-1874

Oil on canvas

31 1/4 x 23 1/4 in (79.4 x 59 cm)

Acquired through the Kenneth A. and Helen F. Spencer

Foundation Acquisition Fund: 1972

From time to time art refreshes and renews itself. Sometimes it is done with shades of difference; sometimes the differences are revolutionary. The gentle Impressionists were revolutionaries. Like Giotto in the fourteenth century, they set in motion a system of stylistic changes that altered for generations the way in which artists perceived their surroundings.

They were, as Frédéric Bazille described them, a “dozen talented people” who decided to organize themselves so that they could exhibit their work outside of the officially authorized Salon. In 1874, after several false starts, a number of them did incorporate themselves into an exhibition society, the *Société anonyme des artistes peintres, sculpteurs, graveurs*, which organized and presented eight exhibitions between 1874 and 1886. By the second exhibition, in 1876, it seems that the members had begun to refer to themselves as “Impressionists.”

The term *Impressionism* was in fact a term of derision used by art critic Louis Leroy to describe the “wild” pictures of Renoir, Degas, Monet, Sisley, and Pissarro in his review of their first exhibition in the April 25, 1874, edition of *Le Charivari*. Indeed, one “wild” picture he was describing was one of two versions of Monet’s *Boulevard des Capucines, Paris* included in the exhibition. Leroy recounted the reactions of a fictitious academic painter in the face of the new art:

Unfortunately, I was imprudent enough to leave him too long in front of the *Boulevard des Capucines*, by the same painter.

“Ah-ha!” he sneered in Mephistophelian manner. “Is that brilliant enough, now! There’s impression, or I don’t know what it means. Only, be so good as to tell me what those innumerable black tongue-lickings in the lower part of the picture represent?”

“Why, those are people walking along,” I replied.

“Then do I look like that when I’m walking along the Boulevard des Capucines? Blood and thunder! So you’re making fun of me at last?”

“I assure you, M. Vincent. . . .”

“But those spots were obtained by the same method as that used to imitate marble: a bit here, a bit there, slap-dash, any old way. It’s unheard of, appalling! I’ll get a stroke from it for sure.”

Those black tongue-lickings were revolutionary. Among the aims of the Impressionists was a desire to record the phenomenon of reflected light. Rather than painting what they knew intellectually to be true, they attempted to capture the sensation of reflected light that when perceived by the eye composes itself into top-hatted gentlemen, balloons, and cabriolets. The visible world could be reconstructed by means of color relationships. Cézanne once exclaimed of Monet, “[He] is nothing but an eye, but, God, what an eye!”

Impressionism discarded precise drawing and drab earth colors. The transitions of light into shadow became transitions of positive color, and instead of working on a dark ground, as had been traditional, Monet worked from a white ground. Not only was the vision revolutionary, so too was the technique. Paint was laid down in freely applied dabs and strokes. The surface texture of the painting itself became an important factor in the representations of light. The scale of the pictures themselves grew smaller, so that the canvases might be carried out into nature and painted on the spot in front of the subject rather than in the artificial light of the studio.

Before entering the museum’s holdings, this important early essay of Impressionism was in the collections of Mme de Meismorande de Dombasle near Dijon, of E. R. Workman in London, and of the Marshall Field family.



CAMILLE PISSARRO
French, 1830–1903

Le Jardin des Mathurins, Pontoise

1876

Oil on canvas

44³/₈ × 65¹/₈ in (112.7 × 165.4 cm)

Museum purchase: acquired 1960

In 1876, Albert Wolff, critic for *Le Figaro* commented: "It is a frightening spectacle of human vanity gone astray to the point of madness. Try to make M. Pissarro understand that trees are not violet, that the sky is not the color of fresh butter, that in no country do we see the things he paints and that no intelligence can accept such aberrations."

A year later, at the third Impressionist exhibition, Pissarro exhibited this painting along with twenty-one others. Monet was the most prolific exhibitor with thirty paintings. At such an exhibition, the public could gain a good understanding of an artist's work in contrast to what they might glean from the Salon, where each artist was limited to no more than five paintings, although the total number of works exhibited might be as many as two thousand.

Maria Desraimes (1828–1894), a writer and ardent politician, was the owner of the Jardin des Mathurins and a neighbor of Pissarro. Interestingly, Pissarro was a socialist and concerned with the workingman's problems. The owner of the Jardin des Mathurins was a woman of similarly strong convictions. In fact, Pissarro was becoming disillusioned with the Impressionists and was ready to abandon his old friends for an antibourgeois union of artists. Only because of the persuasive powers of his friends Cézanne and Gustave Caillebotte did he give up these plans and join the group for their third exhibition.

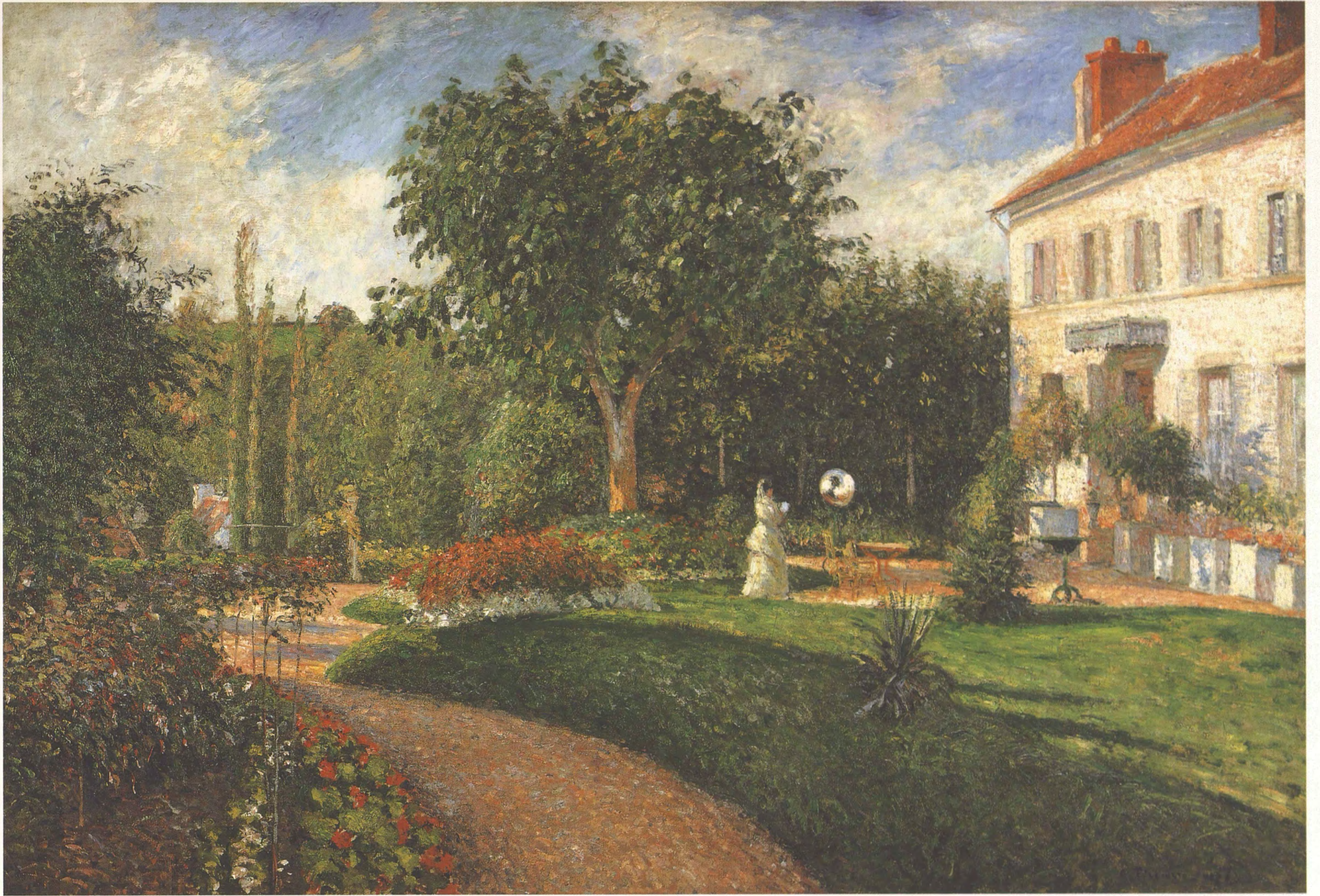
The house in the painting still stands in Pontoise, but most recently it has served as a girls' school. Dr. de Bellio, an early champion and collector of the Impressionists, pur-

chased this painting from the third exhibition. The subject of the painting is the richness of the garden. The picture is dominated by the large tree in the center of the composition. A diagonal path ultimately leads us into the back precincts where we are struck by a wonderful folly known as a *boule-panorama*, a large reflecting glass ball, popular in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Pissarro was the only one of the Impressionists to submit work to all eight of the exhibitions, and in some ways he might be seen as the most faithful. He was the teacher among the Impressionists. Cézanne and Gauguin were his direct protégés and van Gogh benefited from his advice. Mary Cassatt acknowledged that "he could have taught a stone to draw."

The old techniques and traditions no longer sufficed for the rendering of the new vision the Impressionists conceived. The idea that light could inspire worthy paintings was revolutionary. Pissarro commented: "Happy are those who see beauty in modest spots where others see nothing! Everything is beautiful, the whole question lies in how to interpret."

The syncopated brushwork in this painting renders well the play of light across the summer garden, which is blazing with blooming plants. Overall, Pissarro does not display the inherent lyricism of Monet but provides for us a sense of structure underneath his textured surface. This sense of structure links him to the previous generation. It also presages things to come in his protégé Cézanne.





EDGAR DEGAS
French, 1834–1917

Ballet Rehearsal

1875

Gouache and pastel over monotype on paper

21³/₄ × 26³/₄ in (55.8 × 68 cm)

Acquired through the Kenneth A. and Helen F. Spencer

Foundation Acquisition Fund: 1973

“It was so new and strange to me! I scarce knew how to appreciate it, or whether I liked it or not, for I believe it takes special brain cells to understand Degas. There was nothing the matter with Miss Cassatt’s brain cells, however, and she left me in no doubt as to the desirability of the purchase and I bought it upon her advice.” Louisine Elder, a close friend of Mary Cassatt and future wife of H. O. Havemeyer, had become Degas’s first American patron at the tender age of twenty in 1875. Louisine Elder had to stretch herself intellectually to make this purchase, and she also had to stretch her finances to come up with the required five hundred francs. Combining her monthly allowance and those of her two sisters she just managed to close the transaction, which in today’s currency would be equivalent to a hundred dollars. In her first year abroad, under the tutelage of Mary Cassatt, Louisine would also buy—within her monthly allowance—a Monet, a Pissarro, and five of Whistler’s Venetian pastels.

In 1878 the *Ballet Rehearsal* would become the first work of the French Impressionists to be exhibited in America when it was lent to the *Eleventh Annual Exhibition of the American Water-Color Society*, held at the National Academy of Design in New York. In the early 1880s, *Ballet Rehearsal* found itself back at the National Academy of Design. This time, however, it suffered rather ignominious treatment, as Louisine recalled in her memoirs:

We finally found our pastel skied upon the wall of a small room and alack! and alas! the delicate gray and green frame (added by Degas himself) had been generously treated to a thick coating of brilliant gold bronze. We entered a protest at once, and learned that “the rules of the Academy exacted that all

pictures exhibited should be provided with gold frames”; ergo the jury—there must have been one Dogberry at least among them—would not admit an Edgar Degas to an exhibition unless he submitted to their “golden” rule! Of course we were then only in the nineteenth century . . .

Needless to say, Louisine had the frame restored to its original coloration.

The picture’s subject matter was also controversial: a ballet rehearsal was not deemed a subject worthy of the efforts of a serious artist. Degas had presented an informal view of an exercise not usually meant for public consumption. Often with Degas the spectator has the sensation of being a voyeur, of witnessing something meant to be undetected. The lighting adds to the mystery. The gaslights of the stage cast strong shadows upon the dancers and their master who are seen from a precipitous vantage point.

Degas here employed pastels and gouache, media he increasingly favored in the 1880s as his eyesight began to fail, over a monotype. In this early essay his facility at handling the media has lent itself well to the apparently spontaneous and accidental scene. Although he exhibited in seven of the eight Impressionist exhibitions, he was an Impressionist only in certain respects. Unlike many of the others, he did not eschew the human figure for landscape. Draftsmanship was his strength. This talent was not missed by an anonymous critic in a review in *Scribner’s Monthly* of the 1878 exhibition: “Among the pictures from abroad, *A Ballet*, by Degas, gave us an opportunity of seeing the work of one of the strongest members of the French ‘Impressionist’ school . . . in touch this is the assured work of a man who can, if he wishes, draw with the sharpness and firmness of Holbein.”

PAUL CÉZANNE
French, 1839–1906

Montagne Sainte-Victoire Seen from Les Lauves

1902–1906
Oil on canvas
25⁵/₈ × 32 in (65 × 81.3 cm)
Museum purchase: acquired 1938

Cézanne's beautiful painting of the Provençal landmark he immortalized entered the museum's collections in 1938, just barely satisfying the clause that an artist be dead for thirty years before the museum acquires a work by him. In that respect it represents one of the more adventurous "modern" purchases undertaken by the museum. What is more, it was acquired along with another "modern" painting, the *Faaturuma* of Gauguin (plate 55), who himself had been dead just thirty-five years. Both had been in the collection of the French patron and dealer Ambroise Vollard.

Mont Sainte-Victoire, a massive limestone ridge, dominates the Vallée d'Arc near Cézanne's home at Aix-en-Provence, and the artist painted it at least sixty times. As a disciple of the Impressionist Pissarro, Cézanne, like his mentor, was drawn to the underlying structure of things. At the end of his life the inescapable mountain repeatedly filled his compositions. Its geometric structure fascinated him, but so too did the phenomenon of simultaneous perspective (one of the major tenets of Analytical Cubism, which would build its theories on the technique of Cézanne).

The left slope of the mountain, not normally visible to the viewer from a frontal perspective, has been brought forward. Similar subtle adjustments have been employed throughout the valley, which is some twelve miles across. Cézanne felt that when the relationships of tones "are harmonious and complete . . . the picture develops modeling of its own accord"—a statement analogous to Pissarro's

sentiments that "brush strokes of the right value and color should produce the drawing." The artist could "create" through a process; he was no longer simply documenting a fact, but through his own will he was producing a product. Such a change of attitude would have enormous effect on the character of the art of the ensuing century.

Of the series of his Mont Sainte-Victoire paintings done after 1895, the museum's example seems to be the earliest. Distance is represented without recourse to linear perspective. Color modulations alone suggest depth. The large tree in the left foreground casts a great shadow; clouds are discernible in the sky. Three-dimensionality has been established with an economy of traditional means and is essentially implied through Cézanne's subtle system of tonal relationships. By eschewing the small dots, or broken color arrangement, of the Impressionists and substituting his own broader patches of color, he carried the "new vision" a step further.

Cézanne was not treated kindly by the critics. His paintings were considered scandalous in the two Impressionist exhibitions in which he did participate. After 1877 he refused to show his work, and during the next eighteen years his paintings were seen only at the shop of Père Tanguy in Paris, where he exchanged them for pigments. In 1895 Cézanne's fortunes changed after the dealer Ambroise Vollard gave him a one-man show in Paris. At the end of his career, he gained great respect from younger painters.





. 55 .

PAUL GAUGUIN
French, 1848–1903

Faaturuma (The Dreamer)

c.1891
Oil on canvas
37¹/₄ × 27 in (94.6 × 68.6 cm)
Museum purchase: acquired 1938

. 56 .

VINCENT VAN GOGH
Dutch, 1853–1890

The Olive Grove

September–October 1889
Oil on canvas
28³/₄ × 36¹/₄ in (73 × 92.1 cm)
Museum purchase: acquired 1932

Post-Impressionism was a term invented by the English critic and painter Roger Fry to characterize the art of Cézanne, Gauguin, van Gogh, and other French masters who followed the Impressionists. In the autumn of 1910 at the Grafton Galleries in London, Fry organized an extremely important early exhibition of Post-Impressionists. It was titled *Manet and the Post-Impressionists*, and it included Gauguin's *Faaturuma*.

In 1874 Gauguin was a successful young stockbroker. When he met Pissarro and witnessed the first Impressionist exhibition in the former studios of the photographer Nadar on the Boulevard des Capucines in Paris, his life changed. Painting became an avocation that would in time become an obsession, and by 1880 he was in fact invited to exhibit in the fifth Impressionist exhibition. By 1883 he gave up his regular employment to devote himself exclusively to his art. In many ways he was a child of his time, the *fin de siècle*, the end of a tempestuous century in the visual arts. He was consumed by a yearning, a desire to get away from civilization, to return to the essentials of life. He began to experiment with alternative life-styles, first close to home in a commune in Brittany then in such distant spots as Panama, Martinique, and, in 1891, Tahiti.

It was in Tahiti that he felt he had finally escaped the "artificial and conventional." In spite of his material and financial deprivation there, the art he produced was glorious. It was simplified; his lines and colors became stronger, as evidenced in *Faaturuma*, which seems to have been executed in October and November 1891. Expansive,

barely modulated planes of color dominate the picture, and three-dimensional space is not the concern it was for Cézanne. In the 1870s the Impressionists had given the elements of painting new independence. One artist might choose to emphasize the importance of line in his work; another the emotive power of color.

The new freedom of style matched the general sense of freedom Gauguin sought and found in the South Seas. Many of the paintings done in Tahiti express the sense of innocence and reverie seen in this figure who shyly engages the viewer. Unfortunately, Gauguin's genius was lost on most of his contemporaries, and he worked with little financial or critical recognition. At the end of his life he had security from a small stipend he received from the dealer Ambroise Vollard, who was the first owner of this painting, having bought it from an exhibition at the gallery of Durand-Ruel in 1893. Gauguin died a lonely figure in the Marquesas Islands, far from the civilization that he felt stifling.

In his own way Vincent van Gogh was a seeker like Gauguin. The son of a Protestant minister, he was born in the northern region of the Brabant in the Netherlands. By 1875 he was in Paris, where he sought refuge after an unhappy love affair. His personal struggles tormented him. He returned to the Netherlands to attempt to resolve them but found himself back in Paris in February 1886. Five years earlier he had committed himself to painting, a profession that only added to his struggles. Once in Paris, he came under the influence of the Impressionists and the new fas-



cination with Japanese art. The stunning graphic qualities and unusual perspectives of the Japanese woodcuts were particularly provocative.

The one constant in van Gogh's troubled life was a supportive relationship with his younger brother Theo, to whom he wrote more than seven hundred and fifty revealing letters. These letters remain the greatest key to unlocking the mysteries of his enigmatic talent. Two years after returning to Paris he left for Arles, in the south. He settled there and experienced a frenzied period of creativity, producing incredible numbers of paintings, sometimes as many as one a day. Gauguin joined him for a while. From his letters to Theo we learn of his responses to the overwhelming sights and sensations of Provence: "Unfortunately the vineyards are lacking here. On the other hand, the olive trees are very characteristic, and I am struggling to catch them. They are old silver, sometimes more blue, sometimes greenish, bronzed, whitening over a soil which is yellow,

rose, violet-tinted or orange. But very difficult. But that suits me. . . ." And again: "I have been knocking about in the orchards and the result is three studies of olive trees that make at least an attack on the problem. What I have done is a rather hard and coarse reality beside their abstractions, but it will give the sense of the country and will smell of the soil."

Color as it was liberated by the Impressionists served different roles in the hands of different personalities. For van Gogh it expressed emotion. He became the forerunner of Expressionism. The quiet dabs and comma strokes of Impressionism he transformed into the tortured ridges and swirling dashes evident in *The Olive Grove*, which was done late in 1889. The entire picture is energized by the paint itself.

In May 1890 van Gogh moved north to be near his brother. His anguished torments did not subside. In July, unable to struggle further, he took his own life.

JOHAN THORN PRIKKER

Dutch, 1869-1923

*Holländische Kunstausstellung in
Krefeld*

1903

Color lithograph on paper

33⁵/₈ × 47¹/₂ in (85.4 × 120.7 cm)

Museum purchase: acquired 1984

As an art form the poster is a creation of the second half of the nineteenth century, the result in large part of improved printing methods, particularly lithography. Although the poster was designed for ephemeral display in public places, many of the most important artists of the last hundred years have lent their talents to poster design. Henri Toulouse-Lautrec, Henri Matisse, Aubrey Beardsley, and David Hockney are among the most well known.

Poster designs have always mirrored the major styles in painting and the decorative arts. Thorn Prikker, a Dutch Symbolist artist, designed this stunning announcement for a Dutch painting exhibition in the Kaiser-Wilhelm Museum in Krefeld (now in West Germany) in 1903. In his highly ornamented design, Prikker utilized fruit and floral motifs to great graphic effect. He introduced sharper angles into the completely free-flowing, sinuous curves of late Art Nouveau, thereby suggesting the beginnings of Art Deco.

Lithography is a method of surface printing from stone that took on great importance at the end of the nineteenth

century. When Japanese woodcut prints began to infiltrate Europe in the late nineteenth century, many artists experimented with color lithography in ways previously unseen. Large areas of flat color were utilized to create extraordinarily strong graphic images that would catch the eye and attract attention, thus fulfilling the purpose of the poster.

Contemporary collectors realized the aesthetic value and innovative qualities of the poster and began immediately to acquire them. The most popular were even issued in reproduction in series, such as the French publication *Les Maîtres de l'Affiche* (1895-1900). Each poster was offered in a uniform size (11¹/₄ × 15¹/₂ inches). This was a great advantage to the collector and connoisseur of the poster, for many of the most important examples of the 1880s and 1890s were thus available in a practical format, lithographed on quality paper. Other publications of the same type, including *L'Estampe Originale* and *L'Estampe Moderne*, were offered as well, further evidence of the poster's enormous popular appeal.



EMIL NOLDE
German, 1867–1956

Still Life with Masks III

1911
Oil on canvas
28³/₄ × 30¹/₂ in (73 × 77.5 cm)
Gift of The Friends of Art: 1954

In the winter of 1911 Emil Nolde began to write a book he titled *Self-Expression in the Art of Primitive People*. He never got beyond the introduction, but in it we have a glimpse of the depth of feeling that motivated this inventive, expressive artist: "The remains of a disappearing primitive culture . . . interest me . . . the absolute originality, the intense, often grotesque expression of power and life in the simplest shape. . . . The elemental force of all primitive people contains the seeds of future development."

Fresh imagery was what many artists were striving for in the years before and after the turn of the present century. Gauguin sought it in the South Seas; the Cubists found it in African sculpture; and Nolde saw it in the masks of various cultures that he studied in the collections of Berlin's Museum of Ethnology. In *Still Life with Masks III* a wide range of cultures is represented. European carnival masks appear in the center. One hangs upside down; the other bears the snout of a pig. The mask on the far left is inspired by a Solomon Islands canoe prow, and in the lower right is the shrunken head of a Yoruna Indian from the Mundurucu people of Brazil.

In the hands of a number of artists who followed the Impressionists, color began to carry messages of emotion. It was employed for conscious exaggeration. Impulse and feeling guided artists in its usage now, not scientific theories of color. In the first decade of this century, in both France and Germany, several groups espoused these more radical concepts regarding the role of color. The Fauves, or "wild beasts," gathered around Matisse in France. In Germany in

1905 the first of two influential groups was organized. Known as *Die Brücke*, or The Bridge, these artists exploited the psychological unrest of the age, often with violent images. Nolde was a member of this group for only a short time, but of more importance was his relationship to the Belgian artist James Ensor, whom he visited in 1910. Ensor was known for his fantastic and macabre vision. He often utilized such elements as skeletons and carnival masks.

This contact with Ensor is thought to have reinforced Nolde's interests in Primitivism, for after his visit in 1911 he painted four still lifes of masks, including this one. He filled a large portfolio with drawings he made in the Berlin museum, which he labeled "Study Drawings for Still Lifes." Masks also occur later in his work, frequently in combination with other more subduing elements, flowers for example. In this picture they are in and of themselves an "expression of force and life."

Nolde's interest in "primitive" cultures continued. In 1913 he and his wife were invited to participate in an expedition to New Guinea organized by the German colonial office. He was fascinated by the native art, and in March 1914 he wrote in a letter: "We live in a time in which all primal states and primal peoples are being destroyed; everything is discovered and Europeanized. . . . In twenty years everything will be lost." It is clear that his attraction for the art of these little-known cultures was more than aesthetic, but the inherent vigor and impact of the material informed his work with new insights into the use of color and form.





BENJAMIN WEST
Portrait of Mr. and Mrs. John Custance

. 59 .

BENJAMIN WEST
American, 1738-1820

Portrait of Mr. and Mrs. John Custance

Signed and dated, 1778
Oil on canvas
83 × 59 in (210.8 × 149.9 cm)
Museum purchase: acquired 1934

. 60 .

RAPHAELLE PEALE
American, 1774-1825

*Venus Rising from the Sea—A Deception
(After the Bath)*

Signed and dated, 1823
Oil on canvas
29 × 24 in (73.7 × 61 cm)
Museum purchase: acquired 1934

. 61 .

GEORGE CALEB BINGHAM
American, 1811-1879

Canvassing for a Vote

Signed and dated, 1852
Oil on canvas
25¹/₈ × 30³/₁₆ in (63.8 × 76.7 cm)
Museum purchase: acquired 1954

. 62 .

FREDERIC EDWIN CHURCH
American, 1826-1900

Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives

Signed and dated, 1870
Oil on canvas
53¹/₂ × 84⁷/₁₆ in (137.2 × 214.5 cm)
Acquired through the Enid and Crosby Kemper
Foundation: 1977

. 63 .

JOHN FREDERICK KENSETT
American, 1816-1872

A Woodland Waterfall

c.1855; initialed lower left, J.F.K.
Oil on canvas
40 × 34 in (101.6 × 86.4 cm)
Acquired through the generosity of Mrs. George
Reuland through the W. J. Brace Charitable Trust: 1986

. 64 .

GEORGE INNESS
American, 1825-1894

Overlooking the Hudson at Milton

Signed and dated, 1888
Oil on canvas
27 × 22 in (68.6 × 55.9 cm)
Museum purchase: acquired 1933

The collection of American painting has recently benefited from several extraordinary gifts, which, combined with a selection of purchases made in the first years of the museum's existence, have created a grouping of impressive range and quality. The history of American painting is a fascinating and complicated one. Most artists from our country's cosmopolitan environments sought to emulate European traditions. Others expressed their independence and created uniquely American visions. Still others, benefiting from very little professional training, created a fresh, even naive, approach to their surroundings. The Nelson-Atkins Museum has a fine, representative selection of paint-

ings highlighting more than a century of activity in America.

The archetypal American artist in Europe is Benjamin West, who demonstrated a precocious talent for drawing. Arriving in Rome in July 1760, West was the first American artist to travel to Italy for serious study. He remained in Italy until 1763 and then settled permanently in London. His London studio became a gathering point for other expatriate American artists. Every American, including Copley, Trumbull, Morse, and Fulton, who went to London to study found him helpful and supportive. West found great favor in his adopted country, becoming the official



RAPHAELLE PEALE
Venus Rising from the Sea



GEORGE CALEB BINGHAM
Canvassing for a Vote



JOHN FREDERICK KENSETT
A Woodland Waterfall

history painter to George III's court. Upon the death of Sir Joshua Reynolds, West succeeded him as president of the Royal Academy in 1792, a post he held until his death, except for a brief period when he expressed sympathy for the Napoleonic cause.

The wedding portrait of Mr. and Mrs. John Custance is the most important group portrait by West in America. Its grand scale and concept were dictated in part by the fact that the picture was executed for the Royal Academy. In order to attract attention amidst other paintings in the grand halls of the academy, the image needed to be large and complex. John Custance stands with his arm resting on Hymen, the god of marriage, who holds a bridal torch. Custance's wife, Frances, gently grasps her husband's outstretched hand as a cupid flies above her head. They stand in a Neoclassical setting hung with Baroque draperies. A young attendant offers a smoking, garland-bedecked brazier. West has effectively combined the grand tradition of history painting with portraiture. The sitters appear as themselves, although garbed in somewhat fanciful dress.

Perhaps the most well-known of all the paintings in the museum's collection is the one by Raphaele Peale, which until recently was titled *After the Bath*. It employs a meticulous realism of the kind found in Old Master paintings, particularly in Dutch still lifes. In reality it is a delightful visual pun: a painting of a painting largely covered by a cloth. The source of the nude beneath the napkin is thought to be a work by the English Neoclassical artist James Barry entitled *Venus Rising from the Sea* and dating from 1772 (now in the collection of the Municipal Gallery of Modern Art in Dublin). It was reproduced in two engravings in 1772 and again in 1778. Such exercises in verisimilitude might be viewed as ancestral dabblings in issues of great interest to artists later in the twentieth century. The earlier *trompe l'oeil* artists and the Pop artists of the 1960s were both concerned with mundane objects as aesthetic experiences. A picture such as this has a peculiarly modern appeal.

Raphaele is the lesser known of the Peale family painters and few of his works survive. The entire family, including his brothers Rembrandt, Titian, Rubens, and Michelangelo,

as well as their father Charles Willson, were engaged in the production of art. No fewer than twenty members of three generations of this remarkable family achieved success in the arts.

Despite a three-month stint at the Philadelphia Academy of Fine Arts in the late 1830s, Virginia-born George Caleb Bingham appears to have been essentially self-taught. Although well known for his prolific portraits, he preferred to paint scenes from life along the great rivers of the American Midwest, the Missouri and the Mississippi. He knew well the river cities of Booneville, Columbia, Liberty, St. Louis, and Natchez. The everyday life that went on in these cities was rich and varied, but their political life was particularly colorful and rambunctious. Missourians were consummate politicians. Bingham himself had been part of the political fracas, for in November 1846 his election to the Missouri state legislature had been challenged. Two years later he won back the contested seat and later he became state treasurer.

In a stirring series of genre paintings he recorded the democratic process in this most remote state of the Union. As both a painter and a politician his insights were penetrating. In fact, the artist's politics may have been as important a factor in these paintings as his aesthetics.

In *Canvassing for a Vote* the political process takes place in Arrow Rock, Missouri, in front of a still-extant tavern across the street from Bingham's house. In spite of his lack of formal training, Bingham's style is not primitive (with indiscriminate attention placed on each detail). Instead, he employed a very sophisticated organization of color and light. His palette is one of the most personal aspects of a style that utilizes a system of warm shadows, cool half-lights, and warm highlights. Here he displays smoky, muted shades. Changing patterns of light, a very important concern for him, are sensitively handled.

This scene was commissioned by the New York art dealers Goupil and Co., who proposed to issue an edition of lithographs after the painting. Bingham was delighted with this prospect. He realized that such publication "will be calculated to extend my reputation and enhance the value of



FREDERIC CHURCH
Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives



my future works," for Easterners were eager for these views from the frontier. The lithograph was published by Regnier in 1853.

Frederic Edwin Church painted scenes that excited the imaginations of the curious in a more sedentary time. The ancient world was inaccessible to most people. One of the foremost landscape painters of the nineteenth century, Church was an inveterate traveler, eager to paint the exotic and unique. This quest took him to Europe, South America, the Middle East, and even the Arctic. Some of his most famous works come from these travels, like *Heart of the Andes* (1859) in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and *The Icebergs* (1861) in the Dallas Museum of Fine Arts.

Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives comes from the longest, yet least known, of his expeditions. Beginning in the fall of 1867 he traveled throughout Europe and the Middle East, not returning home until the next spring. Jerusalem, an eagerly sought destination, had been a disappointment. Church was ill from the sea voyage and the weather had been uncooperative; rain and wind had plagued him for the two weeks he was there. He was determined, however, to accomplish his objective—sketching the city from the Mount of Olives. His diligence paid off. From scores of drawings and oil sketches he produced this expansive, dramatic panorama of the ancient city. It went on view in a one-painting show at Goupil's gallery in New York on March 27, 1871, and was an instant success. The public came in droves. At times people stood six deep to view this powerful vision and to see the key sights and monuments of the venerable city. The natural curiosity of the viewers was enhanced by word of recent archaeological discoveries. The painting allowed the public to see the important ancient monuments of Jerusalem in one enormous panorama. Viewed from the Mount of Olives facing west, Mount Zion is visible on the horizon at the upper left; Gethsemane appears in the middle ground between the trees at the lower right, as does the tomb of the Virgin. The commanding structure in the center is the Russian Hospice. It is early spring. A tremendous thunderstorm is clearing just before

sunset. The city is cleansed and refreshed. The drama of nature is overpowering.

Purveyor of a more modest, though nonetheless romantic vision, was John Kensett, the American son of an immigrant English engraver. First an engraver, too, Kensett was eventually encouraged to turn to painting. His resolve to make this change was buoyed by the encouragement he received after the exhibition of one of his landscape subjects at the National Academy of Design in 1838. In the summer of 1840 he set off on a European tour with three other artists, Asher B. Durand among them. Subsequently he left the others and went to live in Paris. Upon his return to New York in 1847 he was an almost immediate success.

Although Kensett made sketches from nature, the size and finish of *A Woodland Waterfall* would seem to indicate that it was created in the studio. He was fond of intimate scenes, which he painted with an extreme delicacy and subtle range of tones, in order to encourage the spectator to ponder nature. It is clear that he was much influenced by English landscape painting during a two-year sojourn there from 1843 to 1845. Evident too in the character of his technique is his knowledge of painters of the French Barbizon School, who used rapid brushwork, distinctive brush strokes, varied impasto, and scumbling.

Also influenced by the Barbizon School was George Inness, a native of the Hudson River valley, but not strictly a member of the Hudson River School. Inness spent several summers at Milton on the western bank of the river. By 1888, the year that *Overlooking the Hudson at Milton* was done, Inness no longer worked at Milton, so this painting may have been created from memory. In 1879 he had made an etching, apparently the only one to survive, entitled *A Scene at Milton*, in which the view is the same as that in the painting, although reversed.

The high vantage point from the bluffs of the river allows a grand vista. As a counterpoint, the scene in the foreground of a straw-hatted girl and jardiniere on the edge of a clearing is intimate and bears a strong relationship to the subject matter of his French Impressionist contemporaries.



GEORGE INNESS
Overlooking the Hudson at Milton

THOMAS EAKINS
American, 1844–1916

Portrait of Monsignor James P. Turner

c. 1906

Oil on canvas

88 × 42 in (249.9 × 106.7 cm)

Gift of the Enid and Crosby Kemper Foundation: 1983

“Thomas Eakins is recognized as the strongest purely realistic artist of late nineteenth- and twentieth-century America—a rare combination of artist and scientist,” renowned art historian Lloyd Goodrich stated in his 1933 biography of Eakins. A Philadelphian from a family deeply committed to education, the artist arrived in Paris at the age of twenty-two already fluent in French and Italian. He studied at the École des Beaux-Arts with Jean-Léon Gérôme, a staunch supporter of the academic tradition, and he traveled extensively throughout Europe studying the Old Masters, particularly Velázquez and Ribera, before returning to the United States in 1869. Except for occasional trips he took in America, Eakins remained in Philadelphia for the rest of his life.

Controversy was a natural component of Eakins’s life. His scientific interest in the human body led him to two subjects that occur repeatedly in his work, medicine and boxing. In 1875 he painted his extraordinary and unconventional portrait of Dr. Samuel David Gross. He chose to present Dr. Gross, a professor at the Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia, in the school’s surgical amphitheater directing a procedure on an undraped patient. His critics and public were not quite ready for such a veristic slice of medical life. Eakins also held radical views on teaching, utilizing nude male models in mixed classes, and he was a pioneer in the use of photography as a tool for the artist.

About 1900 he began a series of portraits of the Roman Catholic clergy. By the time he did this second portrait of

Msgr Turner, he had completed over a dozen works in the series. Some subjects offered commissions; others had been solicited by Eakins to sit for him. More than half the paintings were full length and impressive in scale. Msgr Turner is shown officiating at a funeral service in the Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul in Philadelphia. He had become vicar-general of the diocese, and just the year before he had attained the rank of monsignor.

Eakins was introduced to members of the Catholic hierarchy at Saint Charles Borromeo Seminary in Overbrook, Pennsylvania, by his friend Samuel Murray, a sculptor. On Sundays the two friends bicycled out to the seminary and stayed for dinner. An atheist, Eakins sought out the company of this group of literate, intelligent men who “represented connections to broader cultural and aesthetic traditions than were generally recognized in Philadelphia.” On the whole they tended to be less puritanical than their Protestant counterparts, and this appealed to Eakins. They were men of distinction and power. Their colorful vestments also offered him artistic challenges not available in the usual garb of Philadelphia male society. This group of ecclesiastical portraits is the most important of its kind ever painted in America.

The painting descended through the Turner family, and in the late 1950s was given to Misericordia Hospital in Philadelphia. For many years it was on loan to the Philadelphia Museum of Art.





. 66 .

JOHN SINGER SARGENT
American, 1856-1925

Portrait of Mrs. Cecil Wade

Signed and dated 1886
Oil on canvas

64 × 53 in (162.6 × 134.6 cm)

Gift of the Enid and Crosby Kemper Foundation: 1986

John Singer Sargent was born in Italy, the son of American expatriates. He studied in Paris with the fashionable portraitist Carolus-Duran. Although he spent little time in the United States, he never gave up his citizenship. Before his death at the age of sixty-nine he had painted more than six hundred portraits and some twenty-five hundred evocative landscapes and watercolors. He was severely criticized by his contemporaries for his social portraits, which many felt did not attempt to go beyond the surface. There is no doubt, however, that Sargent reinstated the art of portrait painting in Britain, a tradition that had fallen into decline after the death of Sir Thomas Lawrence in 1830. He became the preeminent society portraitist of his age.

Sargent's handling of the beautiful *Portrait of Mrs. Cecil Wade* was considered "audacious" and "eccentric" in the 1880s. He had captured the lustrous quality of her gown and the evanescence of the interior with an adroitness and freshness of technique that today is admirable, but then was

perplexingly casual. Both the artist and the sitter were young and shy. She was twenty-three and he was just thirty. She was cool, self-assured, yet reserved, the proper young wife of a stockbroker with keen literary and artistic tastes who it seems commissioned the portrait at his first meeting with the artist. This in itself was a somewhat daring act, for Sargent was just recovering from a great scandal caused by his infamous *Madame X*, a portrait of Madame Pierre Gatreau, which had been exhibited at the Salon of 1884. The subject's décolletage and arrogant pose had offended the sensibilities of the public. As a result of the ensuing controversy Sargent's French commissions dried up, and at the urging of Henry James he left France for England. The commission for Mrs. Wade appears to have been his first significant work after he settled in London.

Not exhibited publicly for sixty years, the portrait remained in the family of the sitter, virtually unknown, until its appearance on the auction market in the spring of 1986.

MARSDEN HARTLEY
American, 1877-1943

Himmel

1915
Oil on canvas
49¹/₂ × 49⁵/₈ in (125.7 × 126 cm)
Gift of the Friends of Art: 1956

In the spring of 1912 Marsden Hartley went to Paris with the help and blessing of Alfred Stieglitz, the catalytic American dealer, pioneering photographer, and promoter of modern art. He took up with a group of German artists and intellectuals who met at the Restaurant Thomas on the Boulevard Raspail. Another American painter, Charles Demuth, was also a member of this group. The German connection would prove to be an important influence, for in less than ten months Hartley was in Berlin, enchanted with the city. Its tempo, brilliance, and cleanliness enthralled him, and he thought he would like to live there. Many American artists of Hartley's generation were drawn to Europe. There they sampled the myriad aesthetic offerings and varied life-styles of the burgeoning nationalistic groups. While Hartley found the Fauves and Cubists of interest, he was also drawn to the German Expressionists. The style he emerged with amalgamated the intensity of the German Expressionists, the compositional concerns of the Cubists, and the mystical symbolism inherent in his own spiritualist inclinations. The sophistication of his work of this period is equal to anything produced by the European avant-garde. It placed him at least a decade ahead of his American contemporaries.

The paintings of his Berlin period responded to the city's stimuli, reflecting his desire "to express a fresh consciousness of what I see and feel around me—taken directly out of life and from no theories and formulas as prevail so much

today." *Himmel* is from a group of war-motif paintings executed during a second sojourn in Berlin from March 1914 to December 1915. These paintings were taken "directly from life," and are filled with emblems of great personal tragedy: Germany's declaration of war on France and Russia and the deaths of his father and of a cherished friend who was killed in action.

Himmel demonstrates a technique derived from Cubist collage. Graphic fragments of German militaristic symbols are laid one over another in a shallow, essentially two-dimensional format. The imagery is flattened and interlocked. Epaulettes, insignia, and cockades have been abstracted and reassembled. The energy and pageantry of war were magnetic for Hartley, and he used the forms of Synthetic Cubism and the intensity and excitement of German Expressionism to create an extraordinary personal vision.

In October 1915 a large exhibition of his work was held in Berlin that included forty-five of his German paintings and other items. But life was becoming severe in Germany, and because of food shortages and other hardships Hartley reluctantly sailed for New York on the S.S. *Rotterdam* in December.

Returning to an America with anti-German sentiments was very difficult for Hartley, who floundered artistically for the next two decades. Ultimately he went back to his roots in Maine, where he finally found direction producing richly toned, expressive landscapes.





THOMAS HART BENTON

American, 1889–1975

Persephone

Signed, 1938–1939

Egg tempera and resin oil over casein
on linen over panel

72 × 56 in (182.8 × 142.2 cm)

Acquired through the generosity of the
Yellow Freight Foundation Art Acquisition Fund,
Mrs. H. O. Peet, Richard J. Stern,
the Doris Jones Stein Foundation,
the Jacob L. and Ella C. Loose Foundation,
Mr. and Mrs. Richard M. Levin,
and Mr. and Mrs. Marvin Rich: 1986

In the face of rising interest in European-derived abstraction, Thomas Hart Benton remained faithful to a figurative style that he felt was better suited to his ambition to create an indigenous American art. As a student in Paris and New York, he had dabbled in the amazing array of styles that sprang forth in the first decade and a half of the new century. By the end of the 1920s it was clear that the story he wished to relate could be more effectively told by means of figuration. From that point forward he would not deviate from his course. He became a prolific producer of easel paintings and was the foremost American mural painter of his time.

Persephone, painted in 1938 while Benton was on the faculty of the Kansas City Art Institute, is one of his many forays into the world of mythology. The goddess Persephone is the daughter of Demeter and Zeus. Both Demeter and Persephone are worshiped in connection with the planting and harvesting of crops and the rotation of the seasons. One day, while gathering flowers, Persephone was taken into the underworld by Hades and given the seed of a pomegranate to eat, thus sealing her fate as an inhabitant of the land of the dead. Persephone would live part of the year with Hades and part of the year with her mother on the bountiful earth. She would be the queen of the underworld and the personification of natural abundance.

Here a twentieth-century Persephone lies pensively be-

neath a tree, the unknowing object of the old fellow's (Hades) approving reconnaissance. She has presumably just taken a dip in the stream. Her garments, shoes, and a basket of flowers lie at her side. The abduction has yet to take place. Although Benton was only fifty at the time he painted the scene, he has caricatured himself in the figure of the old man. He has taken a classical myth and cast it as a modern American drama.

The nude Persephone, the quintessential pinup girl, lies calmly in the midst of natural bounty. The landscape is frenetically alive. Vines, leaves, grasses, and trees swirl and writhe, while in the background the harvest calmly proceeds. Benton composed masterful and complicated relationships of form. It is the energy inherent in a painting like this that was passed on to Benton's most famous student, Jackson Pollock, and became the mainstay of a whole generation of American painters who wrested the role of leadership in the visual arts from the Europeans.

Benton wanted to create an American art reflective of the indigenous culture, and he wanted it to be easily accessible to all comers. Put off by the pretentiousness he perceived in America's museums, he boasted that he would rather hang his paintings in saloons, bawdy houses, Kiwanis and Rotary clubs—places where people could comfortably enjoy his art. For a time *Persephone* found just such a home, Billy Rose's Diamond Horseshoe Bar in New York City.

JOSEPH CORNELL
American, 1903–1972

A Pantry Ballet (for Jacques Offenbach)

Summer 1942

Wood box with plastic lobsters, paper doilies,
metal forks, spoons, etc.

10½ × 18⅛ × 6 in (26.7 × 46 × 15.4 cm)

Gift of The Friends of Art: 1977

In Charles Baudelaire's nineteenth-century prose poem, "L'Invitation au voyage," there is a glimpse of the world Joseph Cornell, the American Surrealist, attempted to create in his remarkable boxes. "A unique land, superior to other lands, as art is superior to Nature, where Nature is shaped by reverie, where it is corrected, beautified, remolded."

Joseph Cornell created tangible worlds from memory and reverie, and he encapsulated their unique landscapes in his boxes. Surrealist is the first label that leaps forward to categorize his efforts. Upon closer examination, however, it is clear that he was a true eccentric whose sources were more remote from the extravagant ironies of Surrealism than is immediately evident.

The closest creative parallel to Cornell's art might be poetry. His combinations of ephemera in shadow boxes yield unending associations. His childhood delight in sea-shells, butterflies, toys, marbles, and clay pipes was combined with his adult obsessions with ballerinas, empty cages, sky charts, assorted Americana, wooden drawers, driftwood, and cordial glasses. He elaborated on a technique (assemblage) unique to the twentieth century, making it something very personal. The boxes become poetic theaters wherein the elements of these childhood pastimes and adult obsessions are metamorphosed into emblematic images of a mysterious self-contained world.

For all of his preoccupation with French culture, Cornell never visited France. He spent nearly all of his life in Flushing, New York, much of it on Utopia Parkway in a modest white frame house. He took care of an invalid brother who preceded him in death in 1968. He once said that he made his boxes out of love for the city of New York. His love for New York lay in the fact that it was a vast storehouse and resource that could supply his singular imagination with appropriate images. He could scour the

city collecting rare first editions, engravings, photographic images—all of which he used in his art, often in combinations that seem completely unrelated. Stendhal, in his *Life of Rossini*, described a genius "made up of a thousand and one little casual observations, modeled upon a series of tiny incidents which he had been gathering since the age of six, remembering them with a vivid distinctiveness and using them on the stage when the occasion demands." The same words aptly describe Cornell.

Cornell had no formal training in art, but he possessed a formidable natural talent. At the Julien Levy Gallery, which opened in 1931, he met most of the painters and writers associated with the Surrealist movement in the United States prior to and during World War II. Although he knew them, he followed a path all his own in which art is, as Gerard de Nerval stated, "the overflowing of the dream into reality."

During 1942 Cornell was infatuated with the work of Lewis Carroll. Clearly the Lobster Quadrille from *Alice in Wonderland* was a direct inspiration for this box. In *Alice* the Gryphon and the Mock Turtle talk to Alice on the beach:

Mock Turtle: "You may not have lived much under the sea . . . and perhaps you were never even introduced to a lobster . . . so you can have no idea what a delightful thing a Lobster-Quadrille is!"

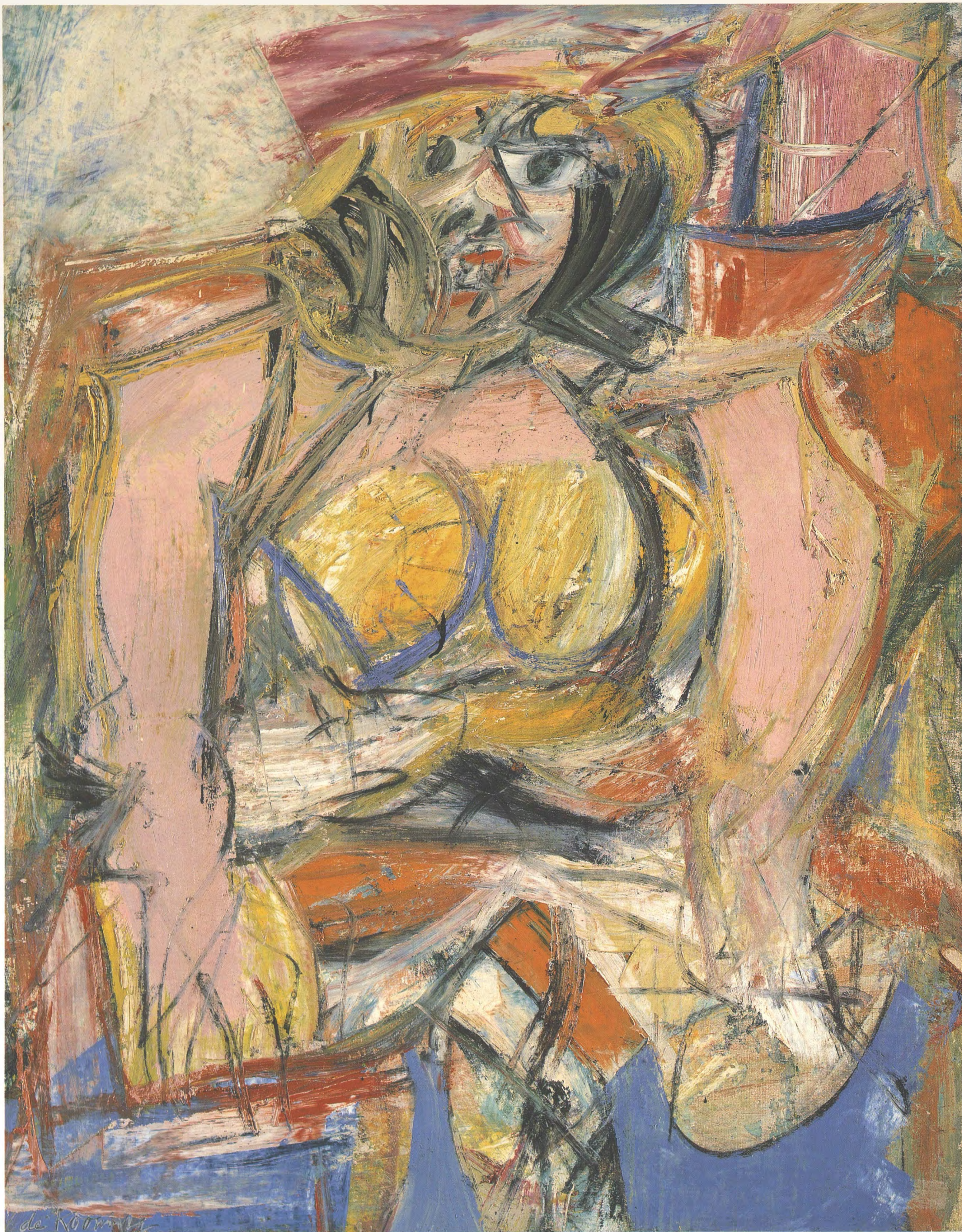
"No, indeed," said Alice. "What sort of dance is it?"

"Why," said the Gryphon, "you first form into a line along the sea-shore—"

"Two lines!" cried the Mock Turtle . . .

The title's Jacques Offenbach was the nineteenth-century French composer whose legacy from his operetta "Orpheus in the Underworld" was the rousing cancan. It is presumably meant to accompany the lobsters in Cornell's box as they perform their Quadrille.





WILLEM DE KOONING
American (born in the Netherlands), 1904

Woman IV

Signed, 1952–1953
Oil on canvas
59 × 46 1/4 in (149.9 × 117.5 cm)
Gift of William Inge: 1956

A native of the Netherlands, Willem de Kooning came to America as a stowaway in 1926. This energetic young artist was a natural draftsman who experimented with an abstract style that from time to time drew from both Biomorphically Surrealist and late Cubist influences. In the late 1930s and early 1940s he became interested in the psychic casualties of human relationships. For a certain period of time he eschewed figurative elements in his work altogether, stating, "I paint this way because I can keep putting more and more things in it—drama, anger, pain, love, a figure of a horse, my ideas about space." Later he would say, however, "It's really absurd to make an image, like a human being, with paint, today. . . but then all of a sudden it was even more absurd not to do it."

In 1950, de Kooning began the first of his six large paintings on the theme of Woman. By March 1953 he had completed the series. It was not a new subject for him, but one that he had addressed in the early 1940s and again in smaller paintings in 1948 and 1949. He had gained a certain reputation for his abstract works, and some felt he had traitorously abandoned this effort in returning to the human figure. He commented, "The women have to do with the female painted through all the ages, all those idols. . . ."

De Kooning is one of the most inventive and original American artists of the twentieth century. Using the resources of Cubism, he explored new territory in fresh ways. The popular Surrealist "parlor" game, *Le Cadavre exquis*, in which each player draws a part of the human body without seeing the segments attached on either side, played its role as well, and his painterly qualities were derived from certain Expressionist works and from Cézanne. However, de Kooning noted: "Of all the movements, I like Cubism most. It had the wonderful unsure atmosphere of reflection—a poetic frame where something could be possible, where an

artist could practice his intuition. It didn't want to get rid of what went before. Instead, it added something to it." Robert Motherwell, a fellow pioneer of American abstraction, also referred to the aesthetic idea of Abstract Expressionism as "a looser form of 1911 Cubism."

Started in February 1952, *Woman IV* bears little relationship to the first three woman paintings in the series. Pimenti, or ghosts, indicate the figure was originally seated, however. The parts of the figure seem independent, in some cases detached. The rich blue across the bottom indicates that the figure is standing in water. In an article in the February 1952 issue of *Art News* there was an extensive commentary on a campaign of cleaning the paintings in the National Gallery in London. Reproduced in the article was Rembrandt's *A Woman Bathing in a Stream*, in which the woman stands in water in a very similar pose, gathering her skirts in her hands. It is conjectured that this image may have influenced de Kooning, particularly in the final two paintings in the series.

Although the women have been characterized as ferocious, de Kooning has said that he wasn't concerned about expressing a particular kind of feeling. What seems to be a greater motivation was his desire to synthesize tradition and modernism, to continue figural painting within the context of Abstract Expressionism.

Woman I and *Woman II* of the series are in the collection of The Museum of Modern Art in New York; *Woman III* is in the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art; *Woman V* is in the Australian National Gallery, Canberra, and *Woman VI* is in the collection of the Museum of Art, Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh. These paintings graphically demonstrate de Kooning's struggle to depict traditional subject matter using the new vocabulary of Abstract Expressionism.



. 7 1 .

FRANZ KLINE
American, 1910-1962

Turin

Signed and dated, 1960

Oil on canvas

80 × 95 in (203.2 × 241.3 cm)

Gift of Mrs. Alfred B. Clark through the Friends of Art:

1961

A major exponent of Abstract Expressionism, Kline painted *Turin* at the apex of his career, just two years before his death at the age of fifty-one.

After a trip to the Venice Biennale in 1960 (where ten of his paintings were exhibited), the artist began to give Italian names to his abstractions. Many of them refer to places he visited or sites he saw, including Ravenna, Placidia (for the Tomb of Galla Placidia), and, in this case, Turin. The paintings themselves had nothing in particular to do with the sites but were simply executed at about the time he had visited these places.

Although much of his work included color, Kline is best known for his black-and-white paintings. These compositions have frequently been compared with oriental calligraphy, a comparison Kline repeatedly refuted, pointing out not only that his interpretation of space was completely different from that of an oriental calligrapher but, more important, that calligraphy was writing and he was not writing. Nonetheless his work imparts the feeling of a monumental brush stroke applied with great vigor and energy. He approached his canvases with a spirit of great energy, but he did not abandon himself to recklessness and impulse. The process of creation was always controlled, and the paintings were the result of lengthy study and subtle adjustments.

For reasons of economy Kline often used commercial rather than artist's paints, buying them in gallon cans. He not only appreciated the economy, but he liked the "feel" of the paint. In its liquid state it could be applied directly to the canvas without the bother of squeezing it from the tube and preparing it. He painted on large canvases, which he attached to a wall unstretched, facilitating his compositional process. Without predetermined boundaries, the composition could define itself in the process of painting and, once painted, the canvases could be rolled up for easy transport. Later they would be attached to stretchers.

Kline often worked from drawings and studies, many of which he made on the pages of a telephone book. Sometimes the study was enlarged into a finished canvas. Often, however, the ideas were assimilated and appeared in a completely reorganized way on the canvas. He preferred to paint at night under strong artificial light, which tends to heighten the contrasts between black and white. In his paintings, however, black and white are to be seen as equals, not as positive and negative elements. He was one of the most important members of that heroic generation of Abstract Expressionists that included Gorky, Rothko, de Kooning (plate 70), and Pollock. The museum is fortunate to have important examples by each of these artists in its collection.

RICHARD DIEBENKORN

American, b. 1922

Interior with a Book

Initialed and dated, 1959

Oil on canvas

70 × 64 in (177.8 × 162.6 cm)

Gift of The Friends of Art: 1963

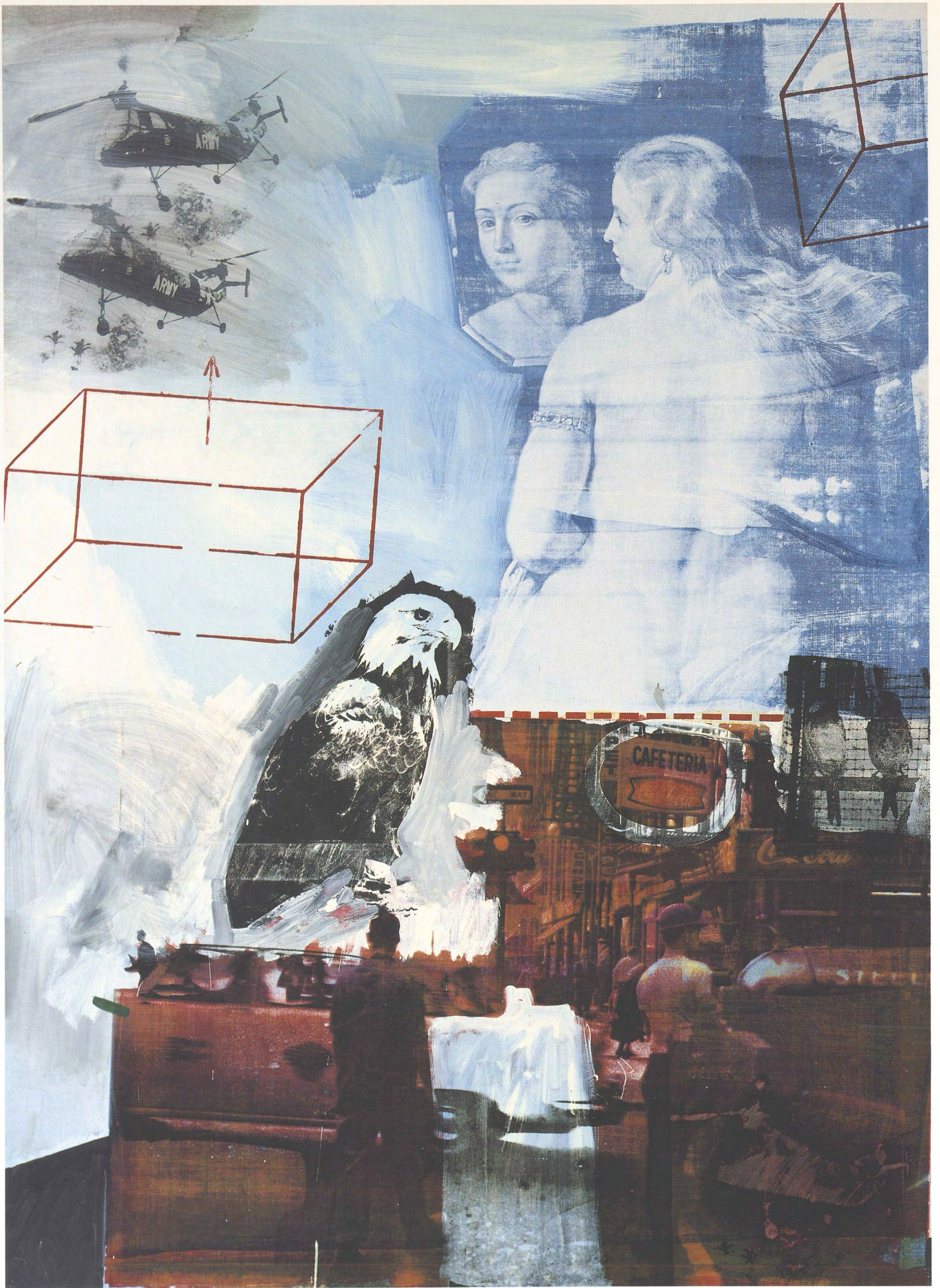
While the Abstract Expressionists were holding sway in New York in the 1950s and early 1960s, a small group of independent artists were working in an alternative milieu—California. One of the so-called Bay Area painters is Richard Diebenkorn, whose memorable *Interior with a Book* fuses Abstract Expressionist gestures and brush strokes with figurative imagery. It is an early work by the artist from a period of self-exploration in which the fresh and spontaneous expressionist method gave new stimulation to the treatment of subject paintings.

The subject of this composition is an elaboration of the artist's still life paintings with which he began his explorations. In them he depicted simply arranged everyday objects—books, cups, glasses, and silverware on tables, often at abrupt angles to the picture plane. In *Interior with a Book*, the chair intersects the picture plane. Often in work of this period, he included a figure, and landscapes were usually visible through large windows. Although there is no figure here, there is the sensation of a physical presence. This is

heightened by the placement of the tree in the background, which at first glance is frequently read as the head of a figure in the chair, and by the open book.

Diebenkorn's spatial compartmentalization, as we see in the landscape visible through the windows, is portrayed by planes of color with overlapping edges. Diebenkorn struggled to formulate a painting style that would give him the freedom to investigate space and color without becoming systematized or unemotional. Like many of his contemporaries he was treading in the difficult middle ground where tradition was being buffeted by the new aesthetic ideals of Abstract Expressionism. His figurative essays express a style characterized by formal relationships that have a vitality independent of the subject matter. He had great respect for those who had gone before him, and he assimilated certain qualities of feeling, if not stylistic nuance, from such divergent predecessors as Matisse, Hopper, Bonnard, and Mondrian. The result was a unique vision characterized by great calm, quiet, and purity of color and form.





Robert Rauschenberg
American, b. 1925

Tracer

1963
Oil and silk screen on canvas
84 × 60 in (213.4 × 152.4 cm)
Gift of The Friends of Art: 1984

One of the progenitors of Pop Art, Robert Rauschenberg came to the public's attention in the 1960s at the beginning of the golden age of American painting. *Tracer* is an important footnote in the development of that era. Created in 1963, it was on display at the Venice Biennale in the summer and fall of 1964. When Rauschenberg won the grand prize for painting at the Biennale in 1964, he was only the third American to do so. James Abbott McNeill Whistler and Mark Tobey had preceded him in that honor.

Rauschenberg and fellow American artist Jasper Johns were the leading painters of their generation. Although generally considered to be members of the Pop movement, they defy easy categorization. "Neo-Dadaism," "belated Abstract Expressionism," or "junk assemblagism" are equally realistic definitions of Rauschenberg's aesthetic. Experimentation is the essence of his art. "Painting," he has commented, "relates to both art and life. I try to fill in the gap between the two."

In 1962 Rauschenberg began to use the silk-screen technique. In *Tracer* he has juxtaposed silk-screened photographic images of Rubens's *Venus at Her Toilet* with an urban street scene, Army helicopters flying over palm trees, and a proud bald eagle, symbol of America. These juxtaposed symbols of love, war, and turmoil create tension. Other works of the same year repeat similar relationships.

"An aesthetic of heterogeneity" is how Lawrence Allo-

way described this juxtaposition of disparate images. Rauschenberg samples the world about him and presents it to us with the same profusion and confusion that he finds in it. Unlike his contemporaries, he feels no compulsion to order the chaos surrounding him. Rubens's *Venus* shares the composition with the urban street, Army helicopters, and America's symbolic bird of prey. A Rauschenberg painting, or combine, as he called his earlier constructed assemblages, is a lexicon of the vernacular.

The subject matter is highly charged but the medium with which it is presented is cool and removed. The diverse photographic images are silk-screened and are at least two generations from the "real" thing. They bear a strong relationship to advertising, that all-pervasive element of twentieth-century American life. Because the photosensitive screens are reusable, the images can be used repeatedly and do find their way into multiple combinations in other works by Rauschenberg.

Rauschenberg is a prolifically inventive artist and has enjoyed long associations with dance and theater companies, particularly the Merce Cunningham Ballet Company, for which he has repeatedly designed costumes and sets. He has even choreographed his own ballet, "Pelican," in which he wore a parachute and roller skates. The interconnectedness of American life and art is the motivation behind much of his creative expression.

WAYNE THIEBAUD
American, b. 1920

Apartment Hill

Signed and dated, 1980
Oil on linen

60 × 48 in (152.4 × 121.9 cm)

Acquired through the generosity of The Friends of Art
and the Nelson Gallery Foundation: 1986

Photograph: Melville McLean

Wayne Thiebaud's easily comprehensible subjects are always presented in luscious and seductive ways. He transforms the ordinary world into vivid, memorable images. Once described as the "wordless poet of the banal," Thiebaud is one of California's most famous painters. Early in his career, he decided that he was not an artist driven primarily by emotion. He could not—as the Abstract Expressionists had done—give up subject matter.

The precipitous hills of San Francisco are well known. Every movie buff has vicariously experienced the thrill and excitement of racing down them in wildly choreographed car chases. Thiebaud offers us another way to know them. He has transformed the famous San Francisco landscape into an icon. The painting is not of an actual hill, instead it is a magical embodiment of the hill. A cluster of houses cling to the top of a skinny, thrusting outcropping of land. Rising above the houses is an apartment building. Sweeping around the base of these forms is a six-lane freeway filled with candy-colored vehicles blurred by speed. The composition is bold and representational but in no way a literal description of reality. The space is compressed and manipulated. Thiebaud's sense of drama, his rich colors, and his inviting textures enable him to heighten our experience of a place, a person, or a trivial notation from quotidian life.

Thiebaud began his career as a painter of still lifes. Indeed he is perhaps best known for his recurring portraits of mass-produced food items, especially cafeteria cakes and pies. One of the hallmarks of his still lifes and figure pieces is the neonlike outline he uses to enhance his forms. This technique is also visible in this cityscape. Rainbow-colored

coronas serve to energize the form and add excitement, thus creating an indelible image. His subjects, including the cityscapes, are often displayed against a white background. But just as in physics, where white is a combination of all colors, so too Thiebaud's white backgrounds seem to be combinations of all colors. They are in no way vacant. The richly applied white paint, often the consistency of thick cake icing, is heightened by passages of pure color visible only at close range.

Although Thiebaud could not give up figurative elements for pure abstraction, he did adopt the gestural orientation of the Abstract Expressionists. The artist's hand leaves a visible imprint on the surface of the painting. One can enjoy the physical qualities of paint on the surface of a Thiebaud or a de Kooning in much the same way. Thiebaud's magical refinement of everyday experience has been linked to the works of Pop artists, including those of Warhol, Lichtenstein, and Rosenquist, but unlike these artists, he uses the medium of paint in a much less impassive fashion. They were more interested in symbols and wanted to achieve a passive, detached point of view. Thiebaud, on the other hand, is interested in the object itself.

The artist has taken on the entire range of challenges open to a painter: still life, landscape, and the figure. The museum is fortunate to possess examples of all of these subjects. In addition to *Apartment Hill*, *Jawbreaker Machine* of 1967 is one of the great icons of the 1960s, while *Bikini* of 1964 demonstrates Thiebaud's uncanny ability to present the figure in that intriguing netherworld between reality and imagination.





ROBERT ARNESON
Pablo Ruiz with Itch

. 75 .

ROBERT ARNESON
American, b. 1931

Pablo Ruiz with Itch

1980
Glazed ceramic
bust $29\frac{1}{2} \times 22 \times 22$ in ($74.9 \times 55.9 \times 55.9$ cm)
pedestal $58 \times 27\frac{1}{2} \times 15$ in
Gift of The Friends of Art: 1982

. 76 .

NANCY GRAVES
American, b. 1940

Zaga

1983
Cast bronze with chemical patination
 $72 \times 49 \times 32$ in ($182.9 \times 124.5 \times 81.3$ cm)
Gift of The Friends of Art: 1984

. 77 .

JIM DINE
American, b. 1935

The Crommelynck Gate with Tools

1984
Cast bronze with applied welded objects,
No. 4 of an edition of 6
 $108 \times 144 \times 36$ in ($274.3 \times 365.8 \times 91.4$ cm)
Gift of The Friends of Art: 1984

The definition of sculpture, just like that of painting, has been continually revised throughout the current century. This group of three sculptures, all executed within a three-to-four-year period, demonstrates the diverse media and inventiveness of contemporary work in three dimensions.

Robert Arneson couples large-scale figurative subject matter with an insistent emphasis on visual puns and facetious narratives. *Pablo Ruiz with Itch* is a collection of art-historical puns that would have pleased the portrait's subject. The venerable Cubist master is shown as he appeared in his *Self-Portrait* of 1907. The posture and angle of his arm are taken from *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*, and Arneson mimics the Dora Marr-period portraits by placing both of the Ionic capital's volutes on the same side of the pedestal. In the fluting of the column there are references to Synthetic Cubist texture and form. The sculpture is a compendium of details from the far-reaching stylistic vocabulary of one of the twentieth-century's greatest geniuses.

Arneson has chosen to work in clay, a medium long relegated to the realm of craft and considered inappropriate for high art. Several decades ago, Arneson, along with a number of other American ceramists, began to liberate a new generation from the prohibitions of this tradition. They explored concerns that had been the province of the sculptor rather than the potter. Monumental scale, primary among these concerns, is explored here. Clay is also a

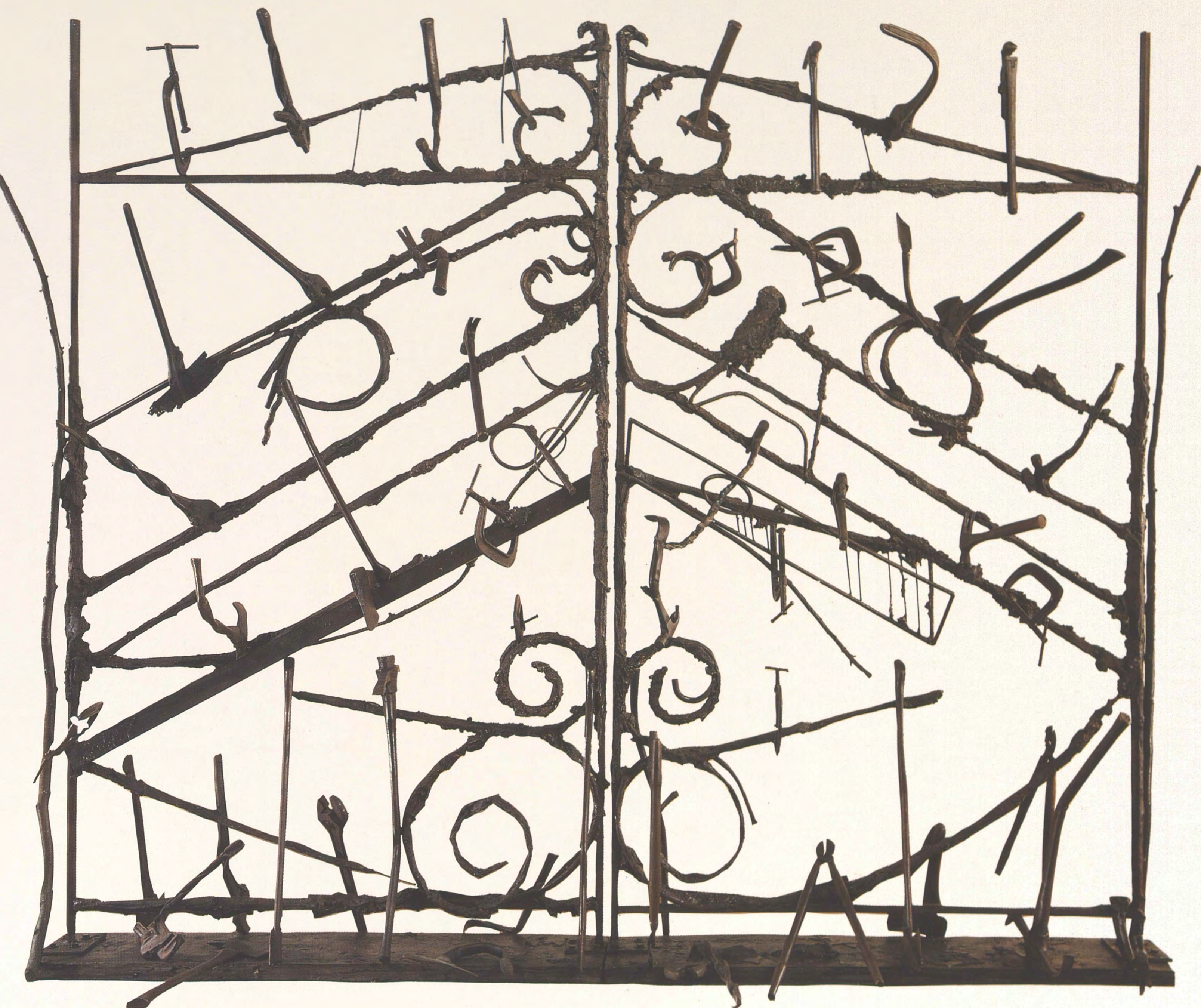
particularly apt material for Arneson's ribaldry because it is very responsive and retains the quality of immediacy.

Since she first came on the New York art scene in 1968, Nancy Graves has been a sculptor, painter, printmaker, film producer, and stage designer. *Zaga*, whose title is a pun on American sculptor David Smith's *Zig*, demonstrates the thin line that separates painting from sculpture in her work. This assemblage, in which natural forms predominate, has been translated into bronze, combining a unique choreography of color and shape and creating a medium that is a cross between painting and sculpture. Many of the natural forms found in *Zaga* are easily identifiable: philodendron leaves, fiddle ferns, and palmetto leaves have been cast directly in bronze and then patinated.

The influences that inform Graves's work are many. Constructivism and the work of Henri Matisse and David Smith are among those that immediately come to mind. Her polychromed or enameled sculptures take off from nature but could never be mistaken for it. She imparts a sense of delicate balance to them, so that although they are in bronze we have the sensation that the slightest breeze could blow them over. They are asymmetrical, some have moving parts, and they defy gravity. She handles a traditional material in an untraditional way, creating permutations that cause us to question the nature of bronze and the kinds of statements artists usually make with it.



NANCY GRAVES
Zaga



JIM DINE
The Crommelynck Gate with Tools

Jim Dine is also a painter and printmaker as well as a sculptor. Early in his career as a painter and printmaker he employed clothing and tools as stand-ins for human figures. By doing so he was labeled a Pop Artist, along with Robert Indiana, Roy Lichtenstein, and Claes Oldenburg. But Dine came to his imagery directly. He grew up in his grandfather's hardware store and in his father's store where plumbing fixtures were sold. Inspired by his childhood memories, he imbued bolt cutters, tin snips, leather punches, and C-clamps with an expressiveness and elegance one would never expect to find.

Although *The Crommelynck Gate with Tools* is a virtuoso work of contemporary bronze sculpture, drawing is its true armature. The lines of the *Gate*, which takes its name from

the gate outside the house and studio of Aldo Crommelynck, the master printer and publisher with whom Dine has worked since 1973, are fluid, graceful, and elegant. We know that the original is a more formal, tighter expression of the ironworker's art. This gate isn't functional.

The tools are cast separately and attached. In fact, each of the planned six gates is unique in that the number and kind of tools on each gate vary. Furthermore, in at least one instance, color has been added. The tools themselves have been animated. They bend, twist, and struggle in three dimensions—they are metaphorical allusions to the purposes to which they are put in reality. But they have also been removed from their existence as objects of labor and apotheosized into a powerful icon.



. 78 .

Ritual Vessel, Type Hu

Chinese

Shang dynasty (c. 1700–1045 B.C.), Yin period (c. 1300–1045 B.C.)

Twelfth–eleventh centuries B.C.

Bronze

16 × 11 in (40.2 × 28 cm)

Museum purchase: acquired 1955

. 79 .

Zoomorphic Spiral

Chinese

Western Zhou dynasty (1045–771 B.C.)

Probably early ninth century B.C.

Bronze

13 1/2 × 9 1/4 in (34.3 × 23.5 cm)

Museum purchase: acquired 1932

The amount of bronze material consigned to graves in early China was staggering. In a single royal tomb at Anyang—that of a comparatively minor member of the court—over one and three-quarter tons of bronze artifacts were discovered. Copper and tin were abundant materials in ancient China. The sheer number of bronze vessels known from the early period indicates that there was a highly organized casting industry.

These ancient vessels were made to contain food and wine offerings to the ancestors and spirit deities. The body of this example, set on a relatively tall conical foot, has a pronounced S-curve profile and lugs at the neck. Two main registers, one at the neck and one on the main body of the vessel, carry large *taotie* designs, the principal theme of Shang decoration. The *taotie* is an early ornamental motif incorporating paired eyes. It evolved into a much more cohesive masklike form before dissolving into intricate elaboration in the Zhou period. The large, hemispherical eyes of the main *taotie* dominate this vessel and hint at an animal presence. Other animal forms are incorporated into the decoration of the vessel—water buffalo and rams are identifiable. The latter are clearly distinguishable on the neck. There is much speculation regarding the original meaning of these motifs, but their exact intent remains unknown. It is clear, however, that they were meant to embody certain powers and were not mere surface decoration.



In Shang bronzes there are nearly twenty distinguishable shapes. Most are tripod or ring-footed vessels, as shown here. This example is a type of jar used to hold ritual wine, which may have been ladled out of a larger container. It would undoubtedly have had a domed lid. The lugs are hollow and correspond to rectangular holes at the top of the foot rim. These may have been used to secure the lid or they may have been purely decorative.

The *Zoomorphic Spiral* of the Western Zhou dynasty is a dragon's head about which the body curls in spiral fashion. It is difficult to say to what use the piece was put, although there is a slot near the end of the body that may indicate it was joined to the end of a wooden pole. This was the first piece acquired for the collection by Laurence Sickman. At the time of acquisition the bronze was encrusted with a corrosive patina that had to be removed to reveal the beautifully conceived geometric pattern of the surface.



Ritual Disk, Type Bi

Chinese, from Jincun, Henan province

Eastern Zhou dynasty (771–256 B.C.)

Fifth–third centuries B.C.

Nephrite, pale greenish yellow

6½ in diameter of disk

(16.5 cm); 8⅝ in wide (21.9 cm)

(Reproduced actual size)

Museum purchase: acquired 1933

The jade ritual disk is one of the most persistent Chinese art forms. Neolithic graves contained simple, unadorned examples, while later imperial China produced them as symbols of personal luxury. Their exact function or meaning may never be known definitively, but it is clear that they originally were thought to possess a potent religious force. Over the ages religious potency seems to have given way to pure ornamentation. It is likely that this example was one of a number of magnificent jades included in the grave of a great prince, or perhaps was even a part of an imperial gift at the burial of a particularly important statesman. In the Zhou and Han dynasties it was customary to use certain prescribed jades in the burial ceremony of great personages. For example, cicadas of jade were placed in the mouths of the interred. Jade in the form of a pig was placed under the arms or in the hands. Disks such as the museum's example were placed under the back of a corpse.

This specimen, perhaps the most well-known of all objects in the museum's collections, is unusual in several respects. A disk with a circular perforation is the symbol of the Supreme Deity, or heaven—heaven having no beginning and no ending. This example has a second ring of jade inside the circular perforation and is joined to the main

body of the *bi* by an elaborate feline form. Both rings have an inner and an outer rim and the space between the rims is filled with “grain bumps,” raised spiral dots that resemble kernels of grain. Two tigers ornament the outer rim of the main ring. Although the second tiger has lost one of his hind legs and part of his tail, these seem to have been the only two animals ever to have ornamented the outer rim.

Jade is such a hard material that it cannot be carved but must be ground. Given the difficulty of working the material, it is remarkable that such a high degree of detail and refinement could be achieved. This property of hardness no doubt reinforced the ancient Chinese belief that jade possessed certain powers of immortality. Indeed, the Chinese regarded jade more highly than gold or precious stone. The surface of the disk retains its original high polish, and because the jade itself is so extremely thin and fragile it is almost transparent.

This piece is reported to have come from a tomb near Jincun in Henan province. When it was exhibited at the *International Exhibition of Chinese Art* held at Burlington House in London in the winter of 1935–1936, it was considered the most beautiful piece of jade to have come out of China.



Pair of Acrobats

. 81 .

Pair of Acrobats

Chinese

late Northern Wei (A.D. 386–534) to Western Wei (A.D.
535–556) dynasties

Unglazed pottery with traces of polychrome

left piece: 9½ × 10½ in (24.1 × 26.7 cm)

right piece: 10½ × 11½ in (26.7 × 29.2 cm)

Museum purchase: acquired 1934

. 82 .

Musicians

Chinese

Northern Wei dynasty (A.D. 386–534)

A.D. 525–534

Mold-pressed gray clay with traces of polychrome
approximately 11 in high each (27.9 cm)

Museum purchase: acquired 1932

. 83 .

Oxcart

Chinese

Tang dynasty (A.D. 618–906)

Early seventh century A.D.

Unglazed clay with color and gold
18 × 31 × 17 in (45.7 × 78.7 × 43.2 cm)

Gift of Dr. C. T. Loo: 1931

. 84 .

Four Ladies of the Court Playing Polo

Chinese

Tang dynasty (A.D. 618–906)

Eighth century A.D.

Painted terra-cotta

10 in high each (25.4 cm)

Acquired through the generosity of Miss Katherine

Harvey: 1948

Throughout ancient Asia objects were buried with the dead. In most respects the afterlife was conceived to be similar to life on earth, and therefore material things would be needed. If a spirit was not provided for, it might become a malevolent force and a potential source of trouble to those left on earth. If, on the other hand, the spirit was content and well provided for, benefits might flow to his descendants. These concerns, as well as a genuine desire for the well-being and happiness of the departed, have led many ancient peoples to stock tombs with a great variety of objects. Ancient Egypt and China brought this custom to its highest level of development.

Two types of items are generally found in the tombs. The first is those actually used during the life of the deceased, such as jewelry and other objects of adornment. The second type consists of objects made especially to bury with the dead and for no other function. Included in this group are models and replicas of human beings, animals, and objects of daily use. These are substitution objects.

During the Shang and early Zhou periods it was customary to sacrifice human beings, as well as horses, dogs, and chickens, and to inter them in the graves of their masters. Great numbers of slaves—as many as several hundred—

could be buried with their masters. Substitutions in the form of tomb figures resulted in part from changes in religious beliefs but also from a desire to create the impression that the owners possessed even greater wealth than they actually did. In the recently excavated satellite pits near the tomb of Qin Shihuang (the first Qin dynasty emperor) in Lintong, Shaanxi province, for example, more than six thousand terra-cotta horses and warriors were found in one pit, and this represented but a portion of the entire precinct.

The earliest substitutes seem to have been made of wood or straw. During the first or the second century B.C., pottery tomb figures seem to have come into general usage. They were initially quite simple and often unglazed. Eventually, these replicas became highly refined works of art. In spite of their fragility, great numbers have survived. Because much of the great sculpture of ancient China has been destroyed by natural disaster, civil war, or even vandalism, they give us invaluable clues about this lost heritage.

The *Acrobats* and *Musicians* are representative of the great range of figures included in tombs, even at these relatively early dates. The pleasures of an earthly life were to be duplicated in the afterlife, and so musicians, dancers, and entertainers of all types accompanied the deceased. Early





Musicians



Oxcart

figures were decorated by painting and by stamping, scratching, and carving the clay or by appliquéing ornament. The heads of the acrobats are separate and can be inserted in different positions. The *Oxcart* shows us a fascinating detail of daily life. Representations of domestic scenes, even models of rice paddies or farmland with ponds were included in tombs. This elaborate cart, pulled by an ox with handsome trappings, is more than just a detail of daily life, however. It speaks about the social status of the deceased. The type of conveyance the rider used was determined by the position he held within society. The cart and ox have been left unglazed and are painted in bright, dry colors with details of gold added.

The *Four Ladies of the Court Playing Polo* are quite extraordinary. Both the horses and riders have been caught in moments of action: the horses with their heads down, galloping forward; the ladies leaning over their mounts, intent on the ball. This set of four players represents a complete team. Their riding habits consist of a long robe with a snug jacket, one shoulder of which can be unfastened to provide freedom for swinging the mallet, and knee-high boots. The artist's keen knowledge of anatomy and the natural articulation of form is combined with a fluid sense of design. In these lively figures the colors added to the unglazed surface have faded, not unexpectedly, after twelve centuries of burial.



Four Ladies of the Court Playing Polo



. 85.

Bactrian Camel

Chinese

Tang dynasty (A.D. 618–906)

A.D. 700–750

Pottery with three-color glaze

36¹/₈ in high (91.8 cm)

Acquired through the generosity of the estate of Joyce

C. Hall and of members of the Hall family: 1983

. 86.

Guardian King (Lokapala)

Chinese

Tang dynasty (A.D. 618–906)

A.D. 700–750

Pottery with three-color glaze

35¹/₂ in high (90.2 cm)

Acquired through the generosity of the estate of Joyce

C. Hall and of members of the Hall family: 1983

. 87.

Guardian King of the North

Chinese

Tang dynasty (A.D. 618–906)

A.D. 740–750

Pottery with traces of unfired pigments

28 in high (71.1 cm)

Museum purchase: acquired 1934

Two general types of burial figures were produced during the Tang dynasty. In the first instance, extremely fine polychrome painting was applied to both unglazed and partially glazed earthenware sculpture. In addition, a new type of ware was developed. Lavishly lead-glazed *sancai*, or three-colored wares, appeared for the first time. In the three-colored wares, oxides of metals such as iron, zinc, copper, cobalt, and manganese were used in the glaze. During firing they were transformed into rich tones of yellow, green, brown, and blue.

The *Bactrian Camel* and the *Guardian King* are from a group of ten three-color glazed pottery tomb figures recently acquired for the museum. The group includes two guardian figures, two officials, two piebald horses, two grooms, and two Bactrian camels. From very early times, tomb figures were mass-produced by assembly-line techniques. Molds were in wide use early in the Qin dynasty (221–206 B.C.), and it quickly became apparent that separately molded body parts could be joined while the clay was still pliable, thus allowing for more fluid shapes and the elimination of seams. Often a piece was reworked by hand when it was fresh from the mold and the clay was still supple. This process allowed for uniformity of production and also for the possibility of enhancing the forms.

The significant feature of this group is its extraordinary realism, despite the mechanical methods by which the pieces were made. The Tang potter was a keen and sympathetic observer of the world around him. The fully laden camel is a reminder of the flourishing trade along the silk routes to the West. The double-humped animal carries a saddlebag embellished with a mask over his felt blanket.

The independent, sometimes stubborn nature of the camel is convincingly portrayed by the potter. The animal struggles against his load, characteristically raising his head and bellowing. His rough, shaggy coat has been cleverly indicated by incisions on the humps and the forelegs.

The guardian, protector of one of the four quarters of the Buddhist heaven, is represented as a ferocious warrior encased in rich armor and with an elaborate headdress. He tramples a demon under his foot. His clenched left hand originally held a weapon to assist him in his subjugation of the demon. His stance is quite typical, as seen for example in the second guardian figure, who also plants his feet firmly on a squirming demon. His complicated armor, a type introduced into China from central Asia in the seventh century, enhances his menacing mien. His ferocious face with its heavy jowls and black-painted beard and mustache is not Chinese in its features.

The second guardian king differs from the other example because it is not glazed. Rather, it has been painted with unfired pigments. Often the faces of such figures would be left unglazed while the body would be enhanced with the beautiful metallic glazes. Greater realism was possible when cold pigments were applied in an individualized way. This was particularly desirable in the representation of foreigners, where a sense of caricature was often undertaken with great delight.

The flaring elements at the elbows and at the end of the coat of the second guardian recall the fishtail motif often seen in the drapery of Chinese sculpture executed in stone and wood. All of these figures are vigorously modeled and express an engaging sense of vitality.





*The Empress and Her Attendants Paying
Homage to the Buddha*

Chinese, from the Binyang caves,
Longmen, Henan province
Northern Wei dynasty (A.D. 386–534)
c. 522 A.D.

Dark limestone with traces of color
76 × 97 in (193 × 276.9 cm)
Museum purchase: acquired 1940

Buddhism was imported into China from India during the Eastern Han period (A.D. 25–220). By the beginning of the fifth century it had gained wide acceptance and many temples and pagodas were being built. Generally these early structures were built of wood and were particularly vulnerable to destruction by fire (often ignited by lightning). About A.D. 460 the Chinese began work on what was to be the first of the great cave temples. The largest of these cave temples with stone sculptures were established at two principal sites: Yungang in Shanxi province in the north of China and at Longmen in the Yellow River valley in Henan province.

In A.D. 494 the court of the Northern Wei dynasty, which had patronized the Yungang caves, moved south and established a new capital at Luoyang, near the Yellow River. Work was begun immediately in the dense gray limestone of the caves in the bluffs above the river. This stone was particularly well suited to sculpture. In A.D. 675, after nearly two centuries, the sculptural program reached its culmination with the completion of a colossal Buddha forty-six feet high. Over eight hundred thousand laborers were employed to create this complex.

The *Empress* relief came from the central of the three Binyang caves at Longmen, from a room approximately twenty-five by nineteen feet in dimension. It graced one side of the entrance while a procession of the emperor graced the other. Each is paying homage to the Buddha.

About a century after their completion the cave complex fell into disuse until archaeological investigations in the twentieth century revived an interest in the site.

In the fall of 1931 Laurence Sickman, then a Harvard Fellow in Beijing, saw the cave temples at Longmen for the first time. He spent more than a week having rubbings made of the reliefs. Later in the winter of the same year he began to see fragments of the relief on the Beijing art market. He discovered the relief was being hacked off the wall, scattered, and sold. By 1934 the *Empress* relief was virtually gone. Sickman located the scattered fragments from all over the world, and reconstruction of the relief began in Kansas City in the winter of 1939–1940. The total reconstruction of the fragments took two years, and only one head was never found, that of the figure on the lower left. The companion relief of the emperor and his court is in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The Longmen cave temples still exist and have since sustained very little damage, save for the natural weathering of the soft limestone.

The composition was designed to maximize the natural illumination from the cave entrance. Its installation at the museum attempts to recreate that sense of directional light as much as possible. The caves would have been quite dark, lighted only by tapers and torches, in addition to the light emanating from the entrance. The beautiful swinging lines of the figures and their robes would have been enhanced by added color of which traces still remain.



Guanyin Bodhisattva

Chinese

Sui dynasty (A.D. 581–618)

Late sixth century

Light gray limestone, traces of gilding

52 × 16 × 7³/₄ in (132.1 × 40.6 × 19.7 cm)

Museum purchase: acquired 1935

This late sixth-century example of Buddhist sculpture is a sublimely beautiful piece of monolithic stone. Slight notations of the body can be perceived beneath the drapery and indications of a softly modeled torso are apparent. Although the figure is presented in a strictly frontal pose and the back is only roughly carved, the artist has clearly begun to move away from a monolithic format.

The figure wears a skirtlike garment folded at the waist and secured by a cord, which is tied in a bow and cascades down her front. A contoured scarf is thrown about the shoulders and crosses over the right forearm. The narrowed end of this scarf hangs on the right side to the knees below the arm and is draped across the front of the figure, continuing over the left forearm. Although both hands are missing, it is thought that the right hand would have been raised, perhaps holding a lotus bud. The left might have held a small water bottle (*kundika*).

A very long double strand of pearls, set at intervals with larger stones surrounded by pearls, loops around the neck, falling to the skirt and overlaying the looping end of the

scarf. The ornate crown is adorned with a central image of the seated Buddha Amitabha, on either side of which is a disk decorated with five cordate leaves whose stems combine into a kind of tassel, followed on each side by a small circle whose surround of C-scrolls peaks at the top. A fillet is tied at the base of the crown and falls in streamers behind the ears, which have elongated lobes. On the upper neck and underside of the chin, one can still see traces of gilding. Only a fragment of the lower portion of the halo remains.

If the halo were complete, the overall ovoid character of the figure would be more apparent. The form is subtle, but clear, with the widest point of the oval at the elbows. From there the oval tapers to the head and to the feet. This elegant shape implies a great sense of calm and repose. Restraint is the watchword in the linear representation of the details. Hints are given. Suggestions are made. There is a complete harmony of parts. The idealized form of this Bodhisattva continued to be used in the evolution toward the more naturalistic Tang style.





. 90 .

Guardian Lion

Chinese, from Hebei province
Tang dynasty (A.D. 618–906)
Early eighth century
White marble with traces of polychromy
11³/₄ in high (29.8 cm)
Museum purchase: acquired 1946

. 91 .

Seated Guanyin

Chinese, from Shanxi province
Liao dynasty (A.D. 907–1125)
Eleventh to early twelfth centuries
Polychromed wood
95 × 65 in (241.3 × 165.1 cm)
Museum purchase: acquired 1934

. 92 .

Standing Bodhisattva

Chinese, from Shanxi province
Jin dynasty (A.D. 1115–1234)
c.1200; polychromy redone 1349
Wood with polychromy
75 in high (190.6 cm)
Museum purchase: acquired 1951

. 93 .

Luohan

Chinese, from Yizhou, Hebei province
Liao-Jin dynasties (A.D. 907–1234)
Tenth–twelfth centuries
Pottery with three-color glaze
40 × 31 in (101.6 × 78.7 cm)
Museum purchase: acquired 1934

Chinese sculpture has enjoyed an unbroken tradition lasting nearly three thousand years. Although it has been regarded in traditional society more as a craft than an art of the stature of painting and calligraphy, the quality and diversity of surviving examples are remarkable. An enormous range of media and techniques was employed in its creation. Wood, bronze, iron, glazed and unglazed clay, marble, sandstone, lacquer, and ivory were some of the materials utilized. This group of four specimens gives some indication of the versatility of the Chinese sculptor.

The lion is not native to China, but as a motif it was introduced from Central Asia and ultimately from Western Asia and India, where it was a royal symbol with allusions to power. This extraordinary example in white marble is a product of the Tang dynasty. The vitality of this lion, with his mouth snarling in reaction to a threat, would indicate that it was carved during the eighth century.

The sculptor has not given us a literal representation of a lion, but rather an expression of strength. The exaggerated contrapposto of the animal's body conveys a highly plastic interpretation of form. The forearms and chest swell powerfully, yet the musculature is elegantly idealized. The mane is highly stylized with its incised curls. The sculptor added to

his interest in pattern and texture a sense of liveliness, expressed in the energetic stance and crisp articulation of the body. The artist has left no detail unresolved—as the tail curving over the lion's left haunch attests.

Bodhisattvas are enlightened beings who delay nirvana in order to bring salvation to man. Guanyin is the most popular of this group and has no fewer than 108 manifestations. Here, in one manifestation, Guanyin is shown seated on deeply weathered rocks near the seashore of his home, an island in the South China Sea named Potalaka. This rocky formation may have originally continued behind the figure, creating a grotto by the sea. The central core of the figure is carved from a single piece of wood. The lower arms and other lateral projections are possibly separate pieces.

The Guanyin sits in a posture of royal ease with his right arm resting on an upraised right knee and his left leg pendant. The supplicant was encouraged to feel that these deities were accessible to living beings. The wood has been gessoed and painted with colors and gold. Although the polychromy probably dates from the sixteenth century, it no doubt reflects the character of the original. The costume is elaborate, the type worn by Indian princes. The half-nude body is adorned with knotted veils and lively drapery, the



sensuous lines of which impart a fluid, calligraphic effect not unlike painting. Indeed, it might be considered painting in three dimensions.

The dynasties of Liao and Jin controlled large parts of north China from the tenth to about the mid-thirteenth centuries. They inherited the late Tang tradition in Buddhist art. The temples of Shanxi province are especially rich in sculpture from this period. This *Standing Bodhisattva* is typical of wood sculpture from southern Shanxi along the Fen River valley. The craftsmanship exhibited in this example is extraordinarily fine.

When new images were made for Buddhist temples they were sanctified and endowed with the ability to be effective objects of worship. A ceremony known as the "Opening of the Eyes" was often performed. At such an event, the pupils of the eyes were painted in (or pieces of paper or clay that had been placed over the eyes were removed). At the same time a variety of objects, including mirrors or prayers on small strips of paper and pieces of colored silk representing various organs of the body and points of the compass, were placed inside the figure in specially prepared cavities that were later sealed. This figure has three such cavities, one in the lower part of the body, one between the shoulders, and one in the back of the head. When they were examined only one small folded document was found in the back, which carried remarkable information. Dated 1349, it gave the name of the craftsmen and the donors who had paid for the refurbishment, plus the name of the temple (Great Cloud Monastery), although the latter has not been identified.

However, this information was confusing because stylistically the figure seems to be older than the fourteenth century. It conforms in every way to sculpture made at the end of the twelfth century, around 1200. The answer was that the date of 1349 was not the date that the sculpture was made but, rather, the date that it had been repainted. This piece and two others that formed a triad had been restored and repainted approximately a century and a half after their original creation. Only two coats of paint exist on the figure, so it is safe to assume that the color is that of the fourteenth-century repainting.

A jewel for the *urna*, seat of insight and energy, probably graced the forehead. No suffering escapes this compassionate deity who delayed his own entrance into paradise in order to bring man salvation. There is a great profusion of scarves, ribbons, and sashes that floats, twists, and ripples over the figure. Everything is in motion. In other examples bits of these swirling details have often been lost over time, but this figure is remarkably complete and one of the best-

preserved Chinese Buddhist sculptures of the twelfth to fourteenth centuries.

Some of the most outstanding post-Tang pottery figures are a group of arhats (*luohan*) discovered early in this century in caves in the Xiling mountains near Yizhou in Hebei province. They were removed from the caves by 1912. The museum's great seated figure is one of seven similar sculptures now known to have survived from the original number (probably sixteen in all). It was brought to Kansas City for the opening of the museum in 1933 and acquired a year later. In addition to the museum's figure, the other six are in the collections of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; the British Museum, London; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (two sculptures); The University Museum, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia; and the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto. An eighth figure, in a private German collection, was in the Ethnological Museum in Berlin when the building was destroyed in the 1945 bombings. While most of the figures' heads have been heavily restored, the Nelson-Atkins figure's head has only required minimum conservation. The eight extant examples seem to form four groups, paired according to their postures.

The Nelson-Atkins Museum's figure sits very straight in the lotus posture with his hands folded in his lap. His head is thrown back. His face bears an expression of intense concentration, as though he is practicing a yogic breathing exercise to enhance his meditation. Slightly larger than life-size, the sculpture has the quality of a portrait. It is the consummate expression of the personal, emotional appeal of later Buddhism in China.

The *luohan* are technical masterpieces of the potter's art, following the late Tang style. The clay bodies are thought to have been modeled over an iron armature, now partially rusted away. These were coated with an outer layer of fine white clay, glazed with *sancai* lead glazes, and fired. To fire a sculpture of this size successfully is impressive indeed. It is daunting to consider the number of failures that must have occurred before sixteen perfect specimens were produced. How the figures got to the cave temple is unknown. It is possible that they were made especially for the caves in order to make the locale a place of pilgrimage on the East-West trade route.

Luohan, disciples of Buddha, are fully emancipated beings who concentrate on personal enlightenment and withdraw from the world. Unlike Bodhisattvas, who are active and compassionate beings, Luohan are wise and passionless.





Silver and Parcel-Gilt Bowl

Chinese

Tang dynasty (A.D. 618–906)

Mid-eighth century

$2\frac{7}{16}$ in high (6.1 cm); $6\frac{3}{8}$ in diameter of lip (16.3 cm);

$3\frac{3}{8}$ in diameter of foot (8.6 cm)

(below: bowl reproduced actual size. opposite: bowl seen from above)

Museum purchase: acquired 1956



This silver and parcel-gilt bowl is one of the most elegant products made for the Tang nobility. It hints at the highly cosmopolitan culture attained by China during this interval of relative peace and high prosperity when China freely admitted foreign peoples and cultures and eagerly absorbed artistic influences from abroad.

The exterior design of this bowl consists of fourteen large repoussé, or raised, lotus petals decorated with chased and gilt floral arabesques. The intervals between the petals are ornamented with smaller, heart-shaped repoussé palmettes. The background is enlivened with engraved plants, clouds, rocks, birds, and wild animals. Stags, deer, ducks, and kingfishers can all be identified. The bottom of the interior plane represents a sea with engraved ripples out of which a variety of sea creatures, real and imaginary, emerges in high and low relief. In the center the head of a sea monster is surrounded by four similar but smaller

heads, two fish (one a catfish), a duck, and a long-billed water bird. The whole of this central roundel is surrounded with a border of curling, surflike waves.

It appears that the exterior and the interior of this bowl, as well as the foot rim, are separate pieces of silver soldered together. The interior and exterior portions are joined at the lip. These techniques were derived from methods common in Persia during the Sassanian period (A.D. 224–650). The process of working a piece in two parts, interior and exterior, also occurred in Western Asia, in Persian or Parthian silver from the early Christian Era. Another very similar bowl is in the collection of the Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst in Cologne. It has been suggested that the Kansas City example is contemporary in date with the Hejiacun hoard of gold and silver objects believed to have been buried at the time of the departure of Emperor Ming-huang from the Tang capital of Changan in A.D. 755.





. 9 5 .

Three-Color Jar

Chinese

Tang Dynasty (A.D. 618–906)

Stoneware with three-color glaze

12 in high (30.5 cm)

Museum purchase: acquired 1952

The Tang dynasty was an age of innovation and experimentation. Indeed, the three centuries of the Tang period have been described as the most brilliant in the history of China. With the empire consolidated and with peace and prosperity at hand, the Chinese civilization reached its most robust levels. There was a great demand for objects of high quality. The forms of its ceramics show dynamic freedom, as though they are bursting with energy. The shapes are voluptuous, characterized by a roundness and fullness, as exemplified even in this ordinary jar.

A great variety of vessels was made in the Tang dynasty, including jars, jugs, ewers, bowls, cups, plates, and offering dishes. This marvelous jar originally had a cushion-shaped lid to complete the form. The stoneware body is covered with a white slip to give greater brilliance to the colors,

which were either splashed on freely or painted on in carefully organized designs. These three-color wares appeared for the first time in the Tang period. The richness of the palette was achieved with the oxides of various metals, such as iron, zinc, copper, cobalt, and manganese. On large jars and vases it was difficult to keep the glazes from running in the kiln and disrupting the design. In some cases the problem was solved by the use of a wax or grease resist, which could be employed to isolate the colors from each other. The resist was painted on as an outline of the separate elements of the decoration, then the different colors, which were applied with a brush, failed to adhere only to the resist-painted areas. In the firing the resist dissipated and, although the edges might blur slightly, the pattern remained quite distinct.

. 9 6 .

Bottle

Chinese

Yuan dynasty (1279-1368)

Mid-fourteenth century

Porcelain with underglaze blue decoration

12 in high (30.5 cm)

Museum purchase: acquired 1933

Porcelain was born from a persistent search for a pure white medium. In north China the search had continued intermittently for centuries. It was through improvements in white earthenware and white-bodied stoneware that porcelain was developed in the Tang period. Porcelain is made of two distinct materials, kaolin, a white-firing, relatively nonplastic clay of which there are massive deposits in China, and white china stone, *petuntse*, a refined, nonplastic felspathic material derived from decayed granite. When properly combined, these two materials produce a vitrified body of white or gray that is impermeable but not very attractive. Because the body is not very attractive, glazes are usually applied.

As early as the thirteenth century, the city of Jingdejen in Jiangxi province had already become the center of the Chinese porcelain industry. By the eighteenth century the city was the production center of the porcelains revered and envied by the Europeans. Jingdejen boasted three thousand kilns whose fires created the impression that the town itself was on fire at night. Connected by a system of waterways to the Yangtze River, the town was well situated for distribution, but, more important, it was near the great deposits of kaolin.

The most famous ware made at Jingdejen was porcelain

decorated in underglaze blue. The blue color was derived from cobalt oxide, which was ground, mixed with water, and applied directly to the white body. The piece was then dipped into the glaze or the glaze was blown on through a tube. The glaze itself was generally a mixture of china stone, burned lime, and burned fern ash. The piece was now ready for firing. To protect the piece while in the kiln, it was encased in a sagger, a case made of fireclay. It was then fired for as long as three days. The body hardened further, the glaze vitrified, and the brilliant blue decoration was made visible. Without the glaze the blue decoration would have oxidized in the kiln, causing it to turn black.

The bottle form has a long history in China. This example has a flaring lip and slender neck tapering to an elegant pear-shaped body set on a banded foot. A band of lappets appears around the inside of the mouth. The fluidity of the material is evident from the slightly lopsided effect of the body. The decorative motif covering the vessel is a characteristic stylized wave pattern superimposed by a vining peony whose blossoms and buds are beautifully interrelated with the fabric of the vessel. The foot is decorated with a band of horizontal diamonds, a motif not unlike ones found in textile designs of the period. Such a bottle would presumably have been for domestic use.





.97.

Pair of Vases, Meiping

Chinese

Ming dynasty (1368–1644), reign of Xuande (1426–
1435)

Porcelain with underglaze blue decoration

21³/₄ in high (55.2 cm)

Museum purchase: acquired 1940

These two, waisted *meiping* made at the behest of the Ming dynasty court are supreme examples from the greatest period of underglaze blue porcelain manufacture. Within the nine-year reign of Emperor Xuande, blue-decorated porcelains achieved an unparalleled level of excellence.

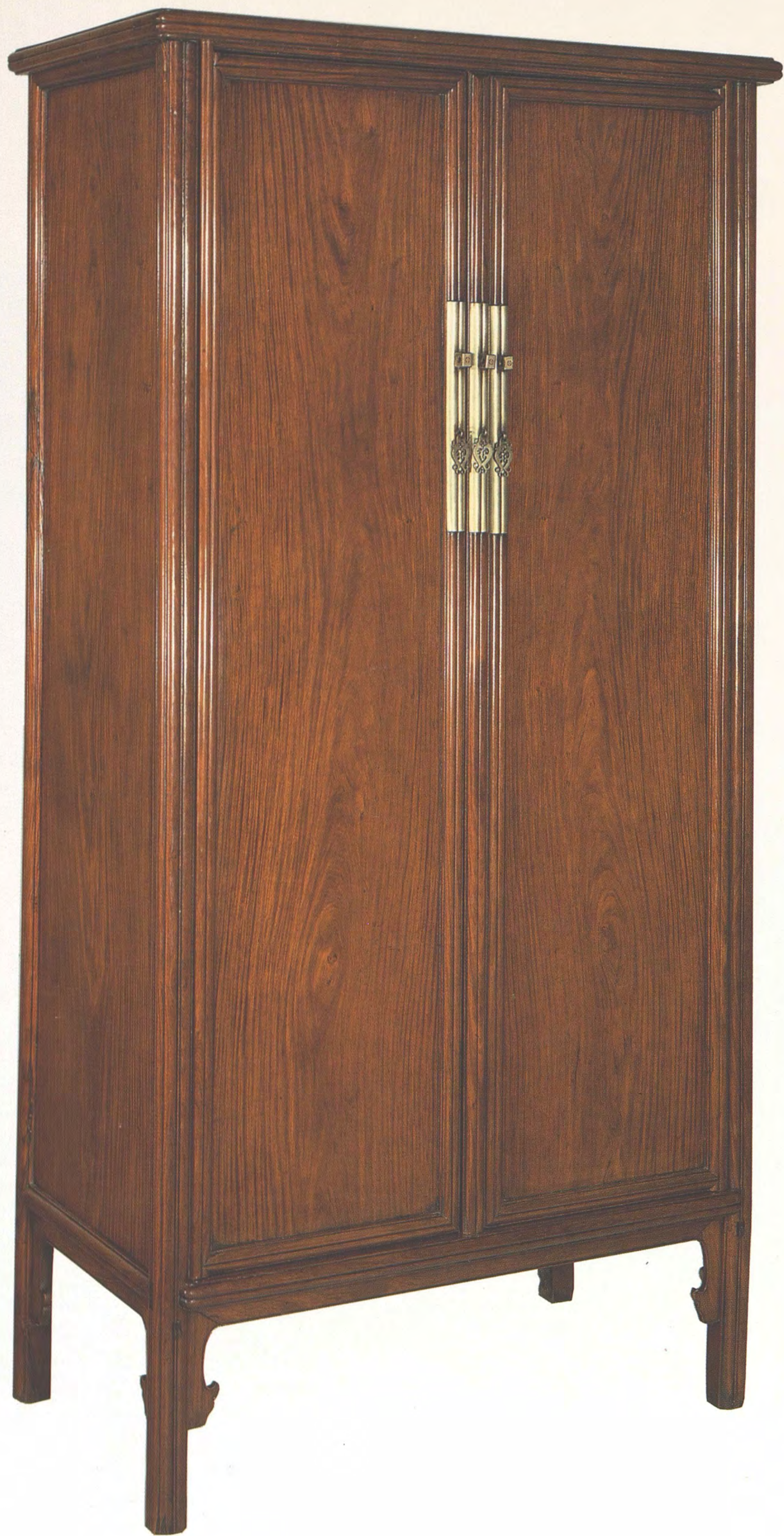
These specimens are superbly painted. A single flying dragon, whose sinuous body is made of overlapping scales, wraps around each vessel. These dragons demonstrate the skills of a painter of extraordinary talent. They are drawn with great vigor and freshness. A band of cruciform clouds embellishes the waist of each vase, while lion masks interspersed with small clouds grace the shoulder. The four-character mark of Xuande also appears on the shoulder of each vase.

The body of the vase is powerfully conceived, sweeping down in a majestic curve to the foot. Visible under the glaze

is the famous “orange skin” texture of the body of Xuande porcelains. This is a quality that has often been consciously imitated in later periods.

Blue-and-white porcelain, first imported into Europe in the sixteenth century, was the most famous product of China. The cobalt blue comes from manganese ore, the best of which was imported from Persia. The tone of the blue depends on the firing of the individual piece. Where the blue is applied too thickly or the glaze applied too thinly, the resulting color is black or brown—in this pair, one of the vases is much darker than the other.

Cracks on the lighter of the two vases may have been caused by their excavation. They are reported to have come from the very tomb of the Emperor Xuande that was looted in 1938. Many items from that tomb made their way to America and Japan.



.98.

*One of a Pair of Cabinets (Type
Shuguei)*

Chinese

Ming dynasty (1368–1644)

Early to mid-sixteenth century

Huanghuali wood with brass lock plates and door pulls

74¹/₈ × 36¹/₂ × 20¹/₂ in (188.3 × 92.7 × 52.1 cm)

Acquired through the generosity of George H. and
Elizabeth O. Davis: 1982

.99.

Couch (Kang)

Chinese

Ming dynasty (1368–1644)

Sixteenth–seventeenth centuries

Huanghuali wood

29³/₄ × 44¹/₈ × 83 in (75.6 × 112.1 × 210.8 cm)

Acquired through the generosity of Mrs. Kenneth A.
Spencer: 1972

The integration of structure and design in furniture reached its apogee first in China. Indeed, the development of the miter, mortise, and tenon join was the most highly refined join conceived by any culture. Wood by its very nature expands and contracts. This is especially true of the hardwoods favored by the Chinese. By employing the mortise and tenon technique, cabinetmakers did not need to use glue. The aesthetic result is highly satisfactory, and the furniture can adjust to climatic changes. Furthermore, it can be disassembled for easy transport. The museum's collection of Chinese furniture includes some of the finest examples extant from the Ming dynasty.

The traditional Chinese house had no closets. Everything had to be stored in chests or cabinets, like the museum's pair of *shuguei*, or tall cabinets designed to store books and scrolls. The simplicity of design in these specimens is accentuated by their impressive height. The doors, bordered by convex moldings, carry white brass lock plates with pendant pulls in the form of facing upright dragons. (The locks are now missing.) The front and side aprons continue down each leg, terminating in a carved half-cloud motif. The interiors are fitted with two shelves, the lower of which has two narrow drawers attached below it, one on either side of the post. The center stile can be removed to facilitate the storage of large articles.

The top, back, and interior of the cabinets bear the original lacquer covering over a clay base. The interior is green and the top and back are dark brown. It is very rare to find the original lacquer coverings on the interior of hardwood pieces. Ming and early Qing furniture is extraor-



dinarily beautiful in part because of the highly selective choice of the color and grain of the woods used, but also because of the sparing and simple use of metal mounts and locks. Mounts of this period come predominantly from two kinds of metal: a golden yellow brass composed of copper with a high tin and zinc content and Chinese white brass made of nickel mixed with zinc and copper.

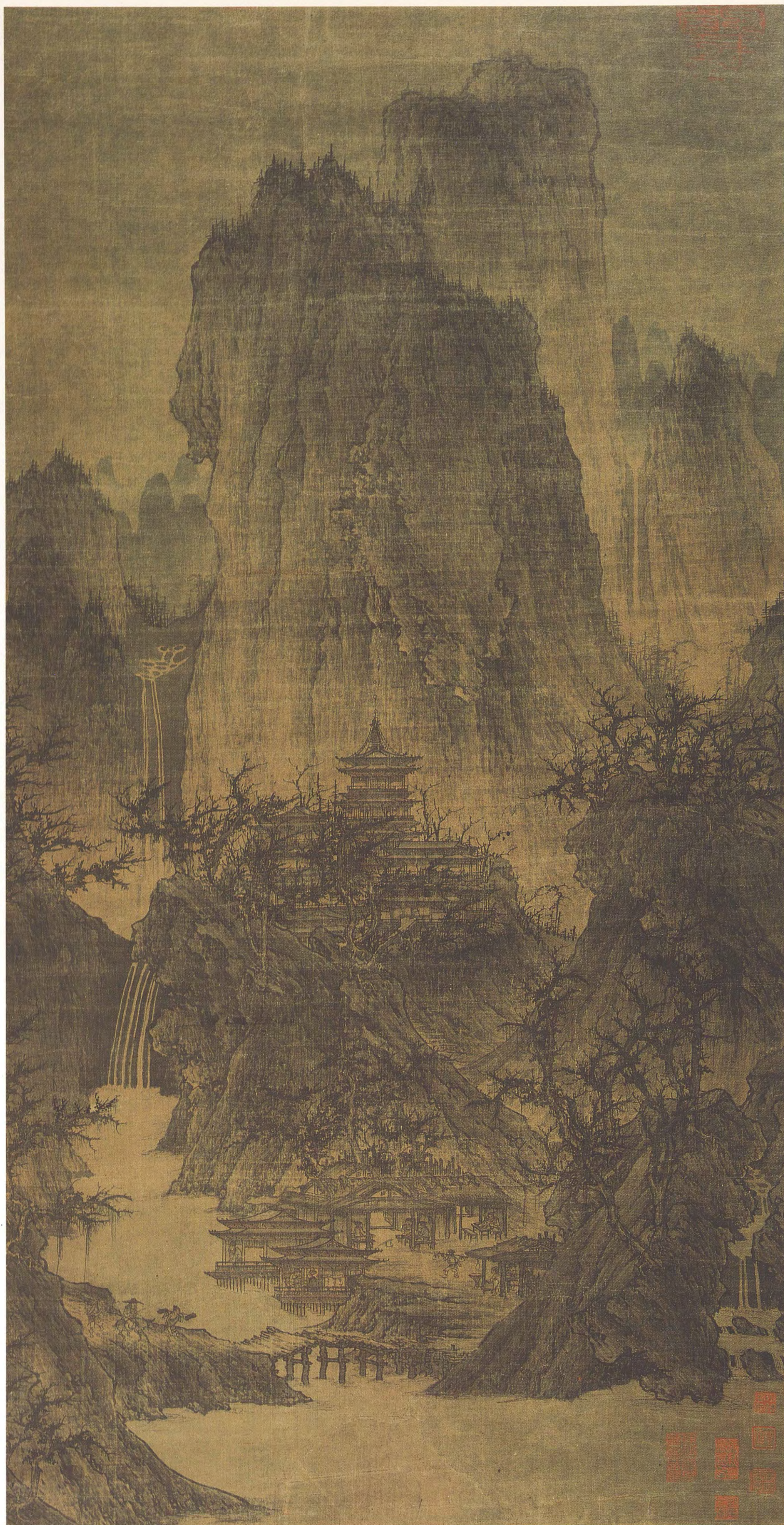
In the Ming dynasty *huanghuali*, a variety of rosewood, was the wood of choice for the finest furniture. It is very hard and dense and has the capability to produce a clear, translucent surface. The color can vary from pale honey to a deeply burned orange brown. The figured grain is dense and may be quite vertical or it may reveal vigorous patterns. Also highly prized is *zitan*, or purple sandalwood, which is the densest and heaviest of all the Chinese hardwoods. Its dark color is considered very dignified and its weight is especially revered. Deforestation in China was so severe that by Ming times much of the wood for furniture was obtained from other countries. The Philippines and the East Indies were much-used sources for the cabinetmaker's woods.

The hierarchy of Chinese seat furniture is complex. In the mid-eighteenth-century novel *Dream of the Red Chamber* by Cao Zhan (c.1715–1763) there are numerous descriptions of interiors detailing the types of chairs used for the varying ranks of society and their placement in a room. Historically the Chinese had furnished their living quarters with mats or platforms, which served as seats. Although the exact date of the introduction of the chair is unclear, its arrival brought a complete reordering of the interior. Today traditional Japan still reflects the living style of Tang and pre-Tang China.

In north China the *kang*, or couch, is often a part of the permanent construction of the house. Made of slabs of gray building brick, it is slightly lower than the average seat height and is nearly always mildly heated by means of interior flues. This was where the family spent most of its time. The museum example in *huanghuali* is a highly refined variation of yet another independent platform tradition originating in wood. Such a *kang* was still a center of much activity, and an entire range of accessory furnishings for use on the *kang* was designed. Most typical is the *kang* table, a low table which is the antecedent of our present-day coffee table. Used on the *kang*, it allowed the occupant to write, drink tea, or carry on any variety of other activities. *Kang* cupboards were frequently used as well. They were long and low, never very deep, and provided storage on the *kang*. A canopy might be hung over the couch to provide a private alcove in the traditionally open plan of the Chinese residence. In time, such an arrangement would evolve into the hardwood canopied bed of which the museum has a very fine example. It is a type known as an alcove bed, of which very few are extant.

There are traces of original lacquer on the *kang*. In hardwood furniture, lacquer, which can be clear as well as opaque, was often applied very thinly to adjust the color of the wood. Pads for the *kang* were designed in sections and were not more than two inches thick. The standard hardwood seat construction called for recessed, softwood floating panels covered with clay and matting.

The simplicity of the *kang* indicates it was made in the late Ming period. Its curved apron and C-curve legs terminate in high, horse-hoof feet. After the end of the Ming period, the curve of the legs on *kangs* became more accentuated.



LI CHENG
A Solitary Temple amid Clearing Peaks

. 100 .

LI CHENG (ATTRIBUTED TO)

Chinese, A.D. 919-967

Northern Song dynasty (A.D. 960-1127)

A Solitary Temple amid Clearing Peaks

Hanging scroll, ink and slight color on silk

44 × 22 in (111.8 × 56 cm)

Museum purchase: acquired 1947

. 101 .

XU DAONING

Chinese, c. 970-1051/52 A.D.

Northern Song dynasty (A.D. 960-1127)

Fishermen

A.D. 1049-1052

Handscroll, ink and slight color on silk

19 × 82½ in (48.9 × 209.6 cm)

no signature or seal of the artist

Museum purchase: acquired 1933

. 103 .

XIA GUI

Chinese, active c. 1180-1225 A.D.

Southern Song dynasty (A.D. 1127-1279)

Twelve Views of Landscape

Signed: "Painted by your servitor Xia Gui"

Handscroll, ink on silk

10¾ × 99¾ in (28 × 230.8 cm)

Museum purchase: acquired 1932

. 102 .

QIAO ZHONGCHANG (ATTRIBUTED TO)

Chinese, active late eleventh century A.D. to after 1126

Northern Song dynasty (A.D. 960-1127)

Second Prose Poem on the Red Cliff

Handscroll, ink on paper

11⅝ × 220⅝ in (29.5 × 560.4 cm)

Museum purchase: acquired 1980

. 104 .

MA YUAN

Chinese, active before A.D. 1189-after 1225

Southern Song dynasty (A.D. 1127-1279)

Composing Poetry on a Spring Outing

Handscroll, ink and color on silk

11⅝ × 119 in (29.3 × 302.3 cm)

Museum purchase: acquired 1963

The five major collections of Chinese painting in the Western world are found in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, the Freer Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., The Cleveland Museum of Art, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, and The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art.

In Chinese aesthetic circles, painting is second only to calligraphy as a high art. The same materials and skills are required for both, and similar critical judgments are applied when assessing the aesthetic merits of each. The pictographic nature of the Chinese written language encourages individual artistic expression. There are three basic forms of Chinese painting: hanging scrolls, which can be easily changed according to season or occasion; handscrolls, of moderate width and nearly limitless length, which are unrolled from right to left to provide the viewer with a continuous scene; and album leaves. Paintings were also done on fans and large screens, although few of the latter have survived.

Very few of the earliest Chinese paintings on silk or paper have come down to us. One of the earliest scrolls to have survived, *Admonitions of the Imperial Instructress* by Gu

Kaizhi (c.344-406 A.D.), is in the collection of the British Museum in London. It is remarkable that it still exists, given the fragile and fugitive nature of the materials. Paintings from the Tang dynasty (A.D. 618-906) are more plentiful but still few in number. For the Song dynasty (A.D. 960-1279) the study of Chinese painting is enhanced by the greater availability of original examples. The collection of Song painting in The Nelson-Atkins Museum is especially fine.

Landscape painting in ink and color or ink alone on paper or silk reflects the balance, moderation, and investigation of the natural order characteristic of Song philosophy. The Song painter aspired to capture the infinite quality of nature. Man plays only a very small role in the great universe, and his representation is usually a footnote in Song paintings. The depiction of space became the primary concern of the artist, and a new kind of realism that addressed the understanding of natural laws took hold. Li Cheng, acclaimed as one of the greatest Chinese painters, was an artist whose extraordinary talent lay in just such representations of landscape.

The hanging scroll *A Solitary Temple amid Clearing Peaks* is an extraordinarily dramatic representation of the spatial relationships of natural forms. The solitary temple is surrounded by the power of nature, yet it remains the focus of the picture. The figures in the foreground are painted in delightful detail, so that the viewer is drawn into the picture by the scenes of daily life. Subtle variations in the textures of gnarled pines, cascading water, and craggy rocks attest to the painter's desire to describe in detail nature's myriad nuances.

Nature also takes center stage in the eleventh-century painting by Xu Daoning. This handscroll is like a musical composition made up of calm passages and crescendos. The viewer is swept along an ever-changing, majestic landscape. Although nearly seven feet in length, the scroll was meant to be seen in small sections as it was unrolled a small portion (about two feet) at a time. This process further emphasizes the composition's rhythms.

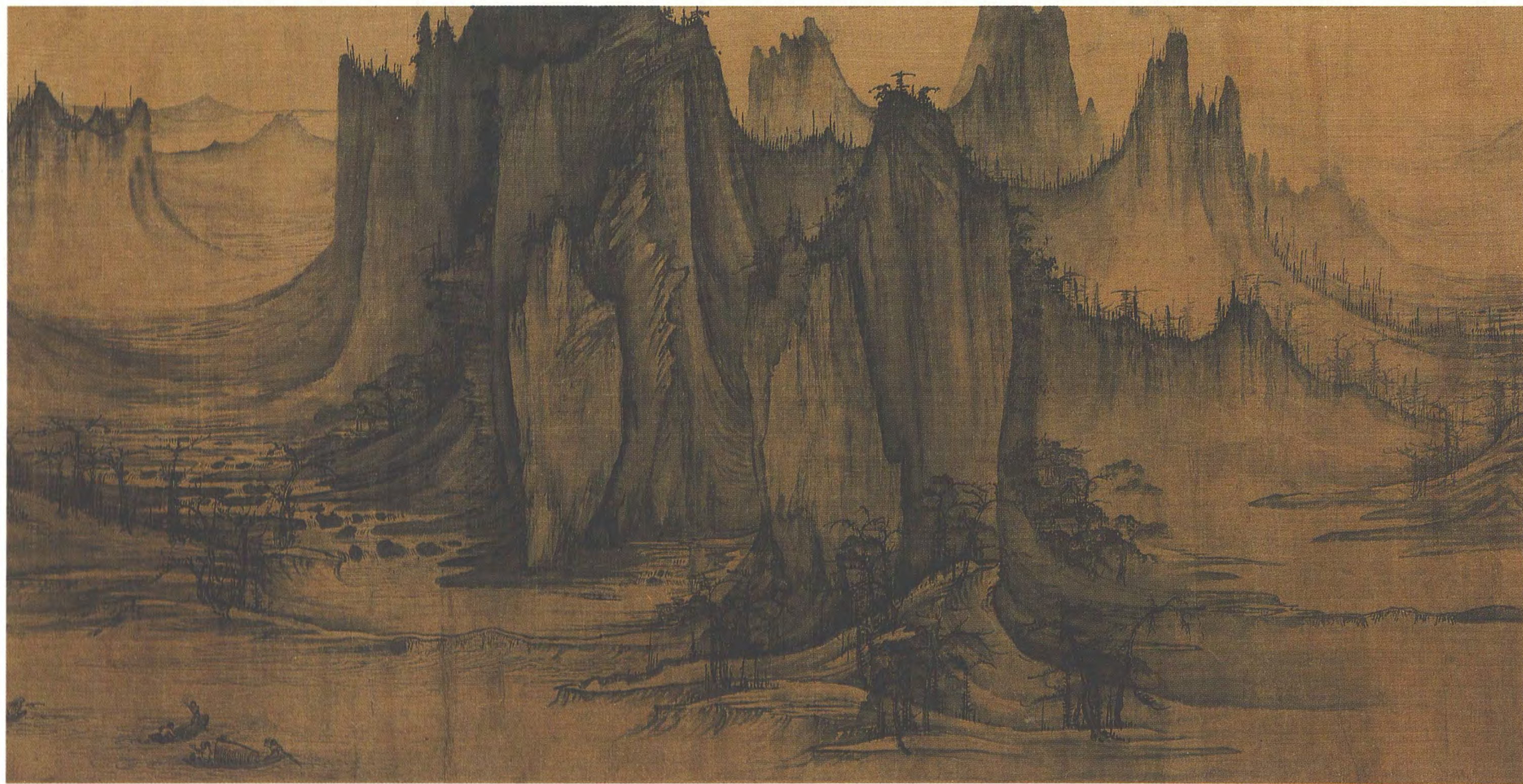
Xu Daoning was a seller of medicines early in his career. In order to attract customers he is reported to have painted on the outsides of the packets he sold. His talent for painting became readily apparent. Attracted to unusual, even ugly characters, he perfected his ability to capture quickly the unsuspecting passerby. Xu was himself unconventional in his manner and dress. Some of this unconventional spontaneity found its way into his paintings, particularly those of his later years. He was blessed with a long life, living well into his eighties. This painting dates from the end of his life, c.1049–1052.

The painting bears twenty-five seals, and there are indications that it has been trimmed at both the top and the bottom, as well as perhaps shortened from its original length. The vertical trimming is particularly evident in the central mountain mass where the tops of the peaks are missing. The present title of the painting dates at least from the early years of the eighteenth century, but it is probably not the original title. The subject matter is typical of Xu's work for he was fond of painting scenes of rivers and mountains in the autumn or winter.

In the years between the eighth and the eleventh centuries, a large bureaucracy comprised of the educated elite evolved in China. A powerful intellectual class of scholar-officials rose to power in part because as government officials they were responsible for the administration of the nation. They were also the promoters and protectors of learning. They became known as the literati.

As a result of this development of cultural power during the Northern Song period (A.D. 960–1127), painting criticism and theory underwent a shift in emphasis. No longer was a painting judged solely on its visual appeal or even on the quality of its craftsmanship. Intellectual content was now a primary consideration. Painting and poetry, therefore, came to be closely identified with one another. In fact, painting evolved into a form of communication among kindred spirits. These new paintings were often referred to as "soundless poems."

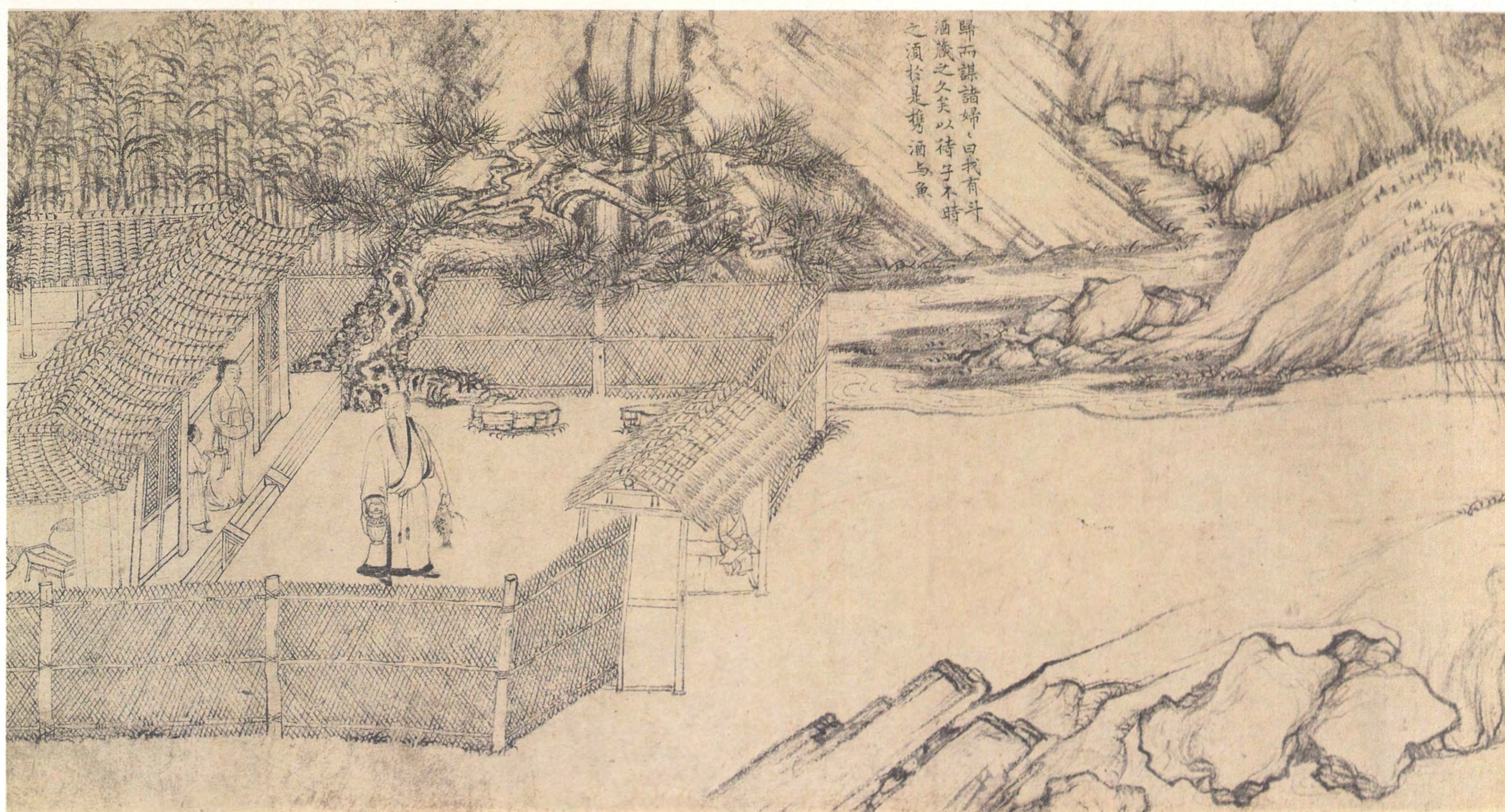
As the emphasis changed, so too did the style and technique. Realism was abandoned in favor of more spon-



XU DAONING
Fishermen



QIAO ZHONGCHANG
Second Prose Poem on the Red Cliff
 (two details of section below)





XIA GUI

Twelve Views of Landscape

taneous representations of the natural world. Free brushwork came to be prized over labored meticulousness. Chinese painting had arrived at a concept not embraced by the Western world until the nineteenth century: the aesthetic experience became valuable in and of itself. Fragmented views of nature and distorted perspectives, for example, are evident in Qiao Zhongchang's *Second Prose Poem on the Red Cliff*.

In the *Second Prose Poem*, everything has been pared to the bare minimum. Only ink and paper are employed. The haunting illustrations of the long scroll illustrate a prose poem by Su Shi, one of the most influential writers and thinkers of the Song period, who returns to the Red Cliff by winter moonlight. The place inspires the poet to reflect on the transitory nature of life.

Xia Gui and Ma Yuan were contemporaries in the Southern Song imperial academy during the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries who also embraced and developed the

more personal and poetic views of nature that were evolving. In Xia Gui's *Twelve Views of Landscape*, the viewer passes through the hours of the day as if on a journey along a river, with each scene moving cinematically into the next. The earlier painters' desire to control the profound powers of nature has been supplanted by a wish to express inner realities. This represents a psychological shift of extraordinary dimension.

The museum has only half of the scroll, which was originally sixteen feet long. This is known because three copies of the entire painting still exist. Sometime between the middle of the eighteenth century and the end of the nineteenth century, the painting was cut in half and the first segment disappeared. The remaining portion bears forty-three seals and nine colophons dating from the time of its creation to 1948. Four captions were added, possibly by an empress who was a contemporary of Xia Gui. A fourteenth-century colophon demonstrates the kind of com-

MA YUAN

Composing Poetry on a Spring Outing





Twelve Views of Landscape

ment a connoisseur felt moved to make directly on the painting: "[Xia Gui] lived in Qiantang. In his youth he specialized in figure painting but then turned to landscapes. His brushwork has a seasoned maturity about it. The tones of his ink are clear and unctuous. Vaporious mists laid down in washes give the feeling of imminent rain. Ink concentration varies from strong to weak in rocks and trees, while distinctions in value mark far and near. Thus, he is first among those of the Academy of Painting. His snowscapes only he adapted from those of Fan Kuan."

Landscape tended to replace the figure as the preferred subject for the painter. There were exceptions. In Ma Yuan's painting *Composing Poetry on a Spring Outing* great attention has been paid to the figure in the landscape setting of a beautiful garden. It may actually be a gathering of friends enjoying nature and sharing in literary and artistic pursuits. It is perhaps even the garden of Ma Yuan's great patron, Zhang Zi, who was himself a poet, painter, and official, as

well as one of the wealthiest men of his time. Zhang Zi built great gardens that were celebrated for their size, uniqueness, and luxury. Throughout the year he would host large parties, and the political and literary elite of Hangzhou vied for invitations. The parties were situated in the part of the garden that best exemplified the beauties of the season at hand. This scene represents spring as willows and blossoming plums are seen in the scroll.

The participants at this gathering are shown around a large table. The focus of their attention is upon a figure with a scroll, brush, and ink. The features of the figures are individualized, which adds further credence to the possibility that the picture commemorates an actual event rather than being simply a conventionalized scene. The figures' postures are relaxed and natural as they gather around the table. Two small children offer some distraction at the left. The focus of attention has been narrowed to the figural scene within the all-encompassing natural setting.



. 105.

LI KAN

Chinese, 1245-1320
Yuan dynasty (1279-1368)

Ink Bamboo

Datable to 1308
Handscroll, ink on paper
14³/₄ × 93¹/₂ in (37.5 × 237.5 cm)
Museum purchase: acquired 1948

. 106.

SHEN ZHOU

Chinese, 1427-1509
Ming dynasty (1368-1644)

Gardeners

c.1500
Album leaf from landscape album of six leaves (five by
Shen Zhou; one by Wen Zhengming) mounted as a
handscroll, ink and light color on paper
15¹/₄ × 23⁵/₈ in each (38.7 × 60.2 cm)
Museum purchase: acquired 1946

. 107.

DONG QICHANG

Chinese, 1555-1636
Ming dynasty (1368-1644)

*Landscape Imitating the Style of Wang
Meng from the Album "Landscapes in
the Style of Old Masters"*

Dated fourth month of 1623
Color and ink on paper
21⁷/₈ × 13⁹/₁₆ in (55.5 × 34.5 cm)
Acquired through the generosity of the Hall Family
Foundations: 1986

. 108.

GONG XIAN

Chinese, c.1619-1689
Qing dynasty (1644-1911)

Mountains and Mist-Filled Valleys

Dated 1671
Album leaf from album of ten leaves,
ink and light color on paper
Each leaf 9¹/₂ × 17⁵/₈ in (24.1 × 44.7 cm)
Museum purchase: acquired 1960

. 109.

SHITAO

Chinese, 1641-1707
Qing dynasty (1644-1911)

Mountain Landscape Beside a River

Dated 1703
Album leaf from album of twelve leaves from
"Wonderful Conceptions of the Bitter Melon": A Landscape
Album for Liu Shitou, ink and color on paper
22³/₄ × 14 in (47.7 × 31.5 cm)
Acquired through the generosity of the Hall Family
Foundations: 1983

In 1276 the Southern Song capital, Hangzhou, fell to the Mongols, who established the Yuan dynasty. Yuan artists sought to recapture the spirit of the art of the past while at the same time emphasizing brushwork and personal expression, which were still wedded to form rather than independent of it.

Bamboo with its inherently calligraphic character was a particularly appealing subject. Li Kan was one of the foremost bamboo painters of the Yuan dynasty. Indeed, the painting of bamboo, especially in ink, is a specialized branch of Chinese pictorial art. Many artists have devoted their entire careers to depicting bamboo in its countless varieties, examining it in varying conditions of weather and stages of growth. Not only was Li Kan the foremost painter

of bamboo in the Yuan dynasty, but he was also the author of the most important book on the art of bamboo painting, the *Zhupu xianglu*, which became a popular reference work for Chinese painters.

Li Kan was interested in bamboo not only as a painter but also as a botanist. According to Li Kan, the painting of bamboo consists of five steps: composition, ink sketch, tones and shading, color, and touching up. Once the painter masters the technique and process, he must prepare himself mentally to be able to capture the spirit of the bamboo. Li Kan further admonished that since each leaf is an expression of character, every stroke must contain the essence of life. By the end of the Yuan dynasty, the painting of bamboo was used less to describe the plant in its many manifestations



LI KAN
Ink Bamboo

and more as a symbol to express psychological states of mind and mood. The descriptive possibilities of the plant and the line used to depict it were stretched to the limit.

This scroll is just the opening section of a much longer painting, the concluding section of which is the bamboo scroll by Li Kan now in the Huihuaguan of the Palace Museum in Beijing. The Nelson-Atkins Museum's section bears two colophons and sixty-three seals. One colophon is dated 1308 and the other 1309. In one, by Zhao Mengfu, the symbolic nature of the bamboo is addressed. It states in part that the "*ci* bamboo may enrich a man's moral sense," while the "*fang* bamboo may make a dishonest man feel shame." *Ci* bamboo is a type in which the branches grow closely together. *Fang* bamboo has square stalks that symbolize uprightness.

Shen Zhou was one of the most successful of the painters, poets, and calligraphers of the Ming dynasty. The basis of his work is landscape into which he has introduced engaging genre scenes, as we see in the album leaf entitled *Gardeners*. The composition is most effectively arranged with the garden fence and stone wall cutting in zigzag

fashion through the middle ground, establishing a strong sense of spatial definition. Texture also plays an important role in the composition, as is evident from the variety of textures described in the trees, fence, rocks, and stones.

These six leaves, now mounted as a handscroll, were done for Wu Kuan (1435–1504), a good friend and important patron of Shen Zhou, and were based, according to the artist, on couplets from Tang dynasty poems. Shen Zhou descended from a prominent family of landowners and never entered government service. This allowed him to devote himself exclusively to creative matters. He is considered to be one of the four most important painters of the Ming dynasty. Wen Zhengming (1470–1559), painter of the sixth leaf in the album, was Shen Zhou's student.

At the end of the sixteenth century Dong Qichang became a leading member of the Ming intelligentsia. His work shaped the taste for his own time and for several centuries to come. He was the preeminent example of the Chinese scholar-official-artist. Few artists had ever painted with such a sense of historical consciousness or such preoccupation with questions of style.

Each of the ten leaves in this album imitates the work of an Old Master. For the traditionally minded Chinese, the emulation of a past style was a mark of the highest achievement. The style of the past master was considered to be simply a point of departure and not as something to be slavishly copied. It was felt that to be a good painter one must see genuine works by great masters of the past. Seeing these works nourished the mind. This was a mark of distinction that set the cultivated painter apart from the uncultivated one. In this quest, however, the painter always had to guard against the pitfalls of mechanical imitation. Dong Qichang acknowledged the danger and distinguished between the direct copying of another's work and what he called a "spiritual communion" with an earlier work and its author. He emphasized that the sense of individuality was to be nurtured in this state of "spiritual communion."

Not only must an artist be a student of the great past masters, but he must also be a student of nature. Dong

admonished the painter to observe the changing aspects of nature at different times of the day. By continually observing the way light changes and the way in which clouds and mists alter form, observation and the hand and mind become one. A similar, if unstated, attitude was expressed by the French Impressionists in the nineteenth century.

Dong wrote extensively on the art of painting. His approach was to reconcile innovation and creativity with tradition. He required the past as a source of inspiration but he also saw its potential to stifle the very creativity that he thought so important.

Early in its history this album was in the possession of Wang Hungxu, a famous historian of the late seventeenth century. Ultimately it made its way into the collections of the Qing dynasty emperor Qianlong (r. 1736–1796).

Gong Xian was the best known of the later seventeenth-century painters in Nanking. He was an ardent loyalist who opposed the Manchu conquest of China. Because of this



SHEN ZHOU
Gardeners



DONG QICHANG
Landscape Imitating the Style of Wang Meng



GONG XIAN

Mountains and Mist-Filled Valleys

stance he was forced into ten years of wandering before he could return to Nanking in 1655. The remaining years of his life were spent eking out an existence from painting and teaching. Although he led a reclusive life of genteel impoverishment, he was still able to maintain his contacts with the scholarly world, and before his death in 1689 he compiled an anthology of Tang dynasty poems.

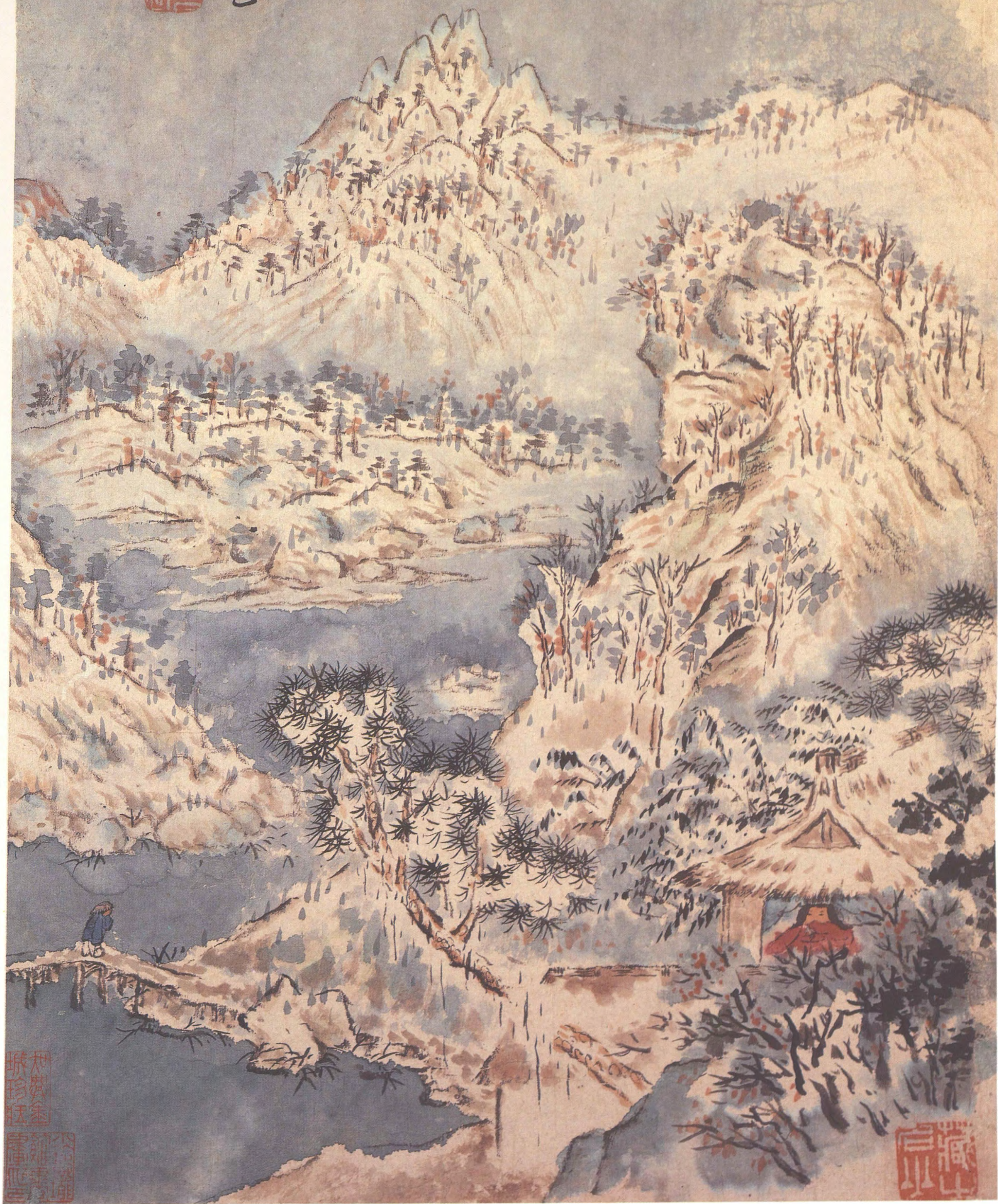
During the 1660s Gong Xian developed a personal style characterized by repeated dots made with the side of a well-worn brush. He often chose to depict bizarre landscapes, as in *Mountains and Mist-Filled Valleys*, where the elements of the landscape take on a fantastic countenance, which is strikingly abstract in character. In Gong Xian's work, the unpainted portions of the paper are as important to the composition as those bearing the ink.

In the artist's colophon he tells of beginning this album on New Year's Day, 1671. Although he painted intently for ten days, it was the end of spring before it was finished. The "plain album," which Gong completed in 1671, was subsequently separated and the individual leaves mounted as hanging scrolls. It has now been remounted as an album.

Shitao, a younger contemporary of Gong Xian, was related to the Ming royal house. When the dynasty fell in 1644, he became a monk and devoted himself to the arts and to traveling. Unlike many of his predecessors, as well as contemporaries, Shitao eschewed tradition and espoused a highly individualistic style of painting. He may be considered, along with Gong Xian, one of a group of Chinese painters of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries known as the Individualists.

His brushwork is bold and eccentric, and he struggled against tradition, wishing to establish a freshness and vitality that would hold great significance for the future development of painting in China. A greater freedom from the veneration of the past and an intense preoccupation with the process of creation marked an extraordinarily important turning point in the path taken by Chinese painting. Self-expression became a fundamental purpose of painting. *Mountain Landscape Beside a River* expresses this new freedom of execution and composition. The looseness and variety of the animated brush strokes are impressive. The result is often a highly satisfactory sense of abstraction.

石頭先生耽清幽標心
 取意風雅流萬里洪濤
 洗胸臆滿天水雪眩雙
 眸架上古書五千軸
 甕頭美酒三百斛一
 讀一卷傾一卮紫裘
 笑倚梅花屋急霰飛
 無斷時凍波滾逸
 冰滾寒涯枯禪我欲
 掃文字卻爲高懷漫
 賦詩 冬日爲
 石頭先生年道長并
 清湘陳人阿長



SHITAO

Mountain Landscape Beside a River

Striding Lion
(Mount for the Buddhist Deity Monju)

Japanese
Kamakura period (1185-1333)
Thirteenth century
Wood with traces of polychromy
26³/₈ × 34 in (67 × 86.6 cm)
Museum purchase: acquired 1977

The beginning of the Kamakura period marked the beginning of the feudal age in Japan. During the preceding Fujiwara period, emphasis had been placed on developing the cultured and leisurely court life of Kyoto. Mercenaries were hired from outlying districts to maintain political power, and the martial arts fell into decline. A bloody war and rebellion ensued, and the military regime that came to power characterized its culture until the nineteenth century.

Monju is a Bodhisattva who symbolizes the Buddha's wisdom and is often shown seated on a lion. Commonly, Monju sits in majesty upon a full lotus blossom that is balanced on the lion's back. In this example, the lion is missing the holy personage.

Realism was a major artistic principle of the Kamakura period, and Buddhist sculpture was of prime importance. A strongly developed musculature and the crystal eyes of the lion demonstrate the attention to detail. Sculpture of this

period was generally constructed by assembling many blocks of wood in what is known as the *yosegi* technique. In this way the crystal eyes might be inserted from inside, imparting a great sense of vitality. Such a technique also allowed for great freedom of detail.

The stride and posture of the lion express power, as does its snarling mouth. Strength rather than prettiness is advocated. Sculpture of the Kamakura period is characterized by a sense of spiritual vigor and physical gusto.

This lion represents Kamakura sculpture at the height of its development. By the fourteenth century the Chinese influence on Japanese art increased, especially with the arrival in Japan of late Song examples. By the fifteenth century the Chinese influence was still more dominant, and Confucianism began to challenge the tenets of Buddhism. As this evolution progressed, the importance of sculpture dwindled.



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NONOMURA SŌTATSU
Japanese, active c.1600–1640
Edo period (1615–1868)

Scene from the Tale of Ise

c.1634

Album leaf mounted as a hanging scroll,
ink, colors, and gold on paper
9⁵/₈ × 8¹/₄ in painting size (24.4 × 21 cm)
55 × 17³/₈ in mount size (139.7 × 44.1 cm)
Gift of Mrs. George H. Bunting, Jr.: 1974

The largest group of Japanese paintings in the museum's collection comes from the Edo period. All of the major schools of this period are represented. This example demonstrates the decorative tendencies found in art of this time, when Japan was prosperous, peaceful, and culturally isolated.

The *Ise Monogatari* was a collection of poems, many by Ariwara no Narihira (A.D. 825–880), devoted primarily to the subject of love. It expressed a purely Japanese sentiment in a country all too frequently dominated by Chinese aesthetics. Sōtatsu produced an album of 125 leaves illustrating the *Tale of Ise*. Once popular with the medieval Kyoto court, these poems became extremely popular with certain non-Confucian literary circles of the Edo period.

Sōtatsu was one of the mystery figures of Japanese painting, and little is known about him. He was, however, the outstanding master of the “decorative style” that flourished in Japan in the early Edo period (A.D. 1615–c.1700). Active in Kyoto and Sakai from 1615 to 1635, Sōtatsu was a member of a group of artists now known as the Rimpa school, which was unconnected to the court. He was therefore relatively free to experiment and as a result developed a strikingly independent style.

On this page, which illustrates a scene from a chapter devoted to “Visiting the Grand Shrine at Ise,” are two courtly figures, a man and a woman, making their way along a zigzag path. The lower portion of a *torii*, or shrine gate, is visible at the upper left. The placement of the trees in the immediate foreground is effective in creating a sense of believable space with an economy of means. The individual elements of the composition offset one another in such a way that they establish a highly sophisticated balance. The meticulous brushwork, blotted areas of color, and sharply angled perspective combine to create a composition surprisingly modern in feeling. The boldness of conception and lavish use of gold are hallmarks of Sōtatsu's style.

The calligraphy in no way intrudes upon the composition, but fits effectively into it. This sense of decorativeness is typically Japanese. The poem written in cursive *hiragana* script may be translated as follows:

If you are so inclined,
Pray come,
For the mighty gods
Forbid no one
To travel the path of Love.



. 112 .

Covered Bowl

Japanese, Kakiemon type, Arita ware
 Early Edo period (1615–c.1700)
 Late seventeenth or early eighteenth century
 Porcelain with molded and overglaze enamel decoration
 5¹¹/₁₆ in high; 8³/₈ in diameter of bowl
 8⁷/₁₆ in diameter of lid (14.5 × 21.3 × 21.5 cm)
 Bequest of John S. Thacher: 1985

. 113 .

Footed Dish

Japanese, Nabeshima ware
 Edo period (1615–1868)
 First half of eighteenth century
 Porcelain with underglaze blue and overglaze
 polychrome enamel decoration
 7⁷/₈ in diameter; 2¹/₈ in high
 (20 cm diameter; 5.4 cm high)
 Museum purchase: acquired 1963

True porcelain appeared in Japan during the first half of the seventeenth century. It made its appearance under the strong influence of Chinese ceramics. Indeed, the general development of Japanese art was shaped to a great extent by successive waves of influence from the Asian mainland, frequently coming directly from China or through Korea. The stylistic and technical innovations that were introduced were assimilated, and the results were distinctly Japanese.

The Japanese porcelain industry was never on a scale comparable with that of the Chinese. Porcelain manufacture at Arita, at its height in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, never employed more than a few thousand persons. Porcelain production grew in importance after the late seventeenth century partly in response to the fashion for Chinese wares and partly to compete with China for the export trade in Europe.

Porcelain production became a source of feudal pride. Processes of production were jealously guarded family secrets. The wares made by the Nabeshima family were highly refined and reserved almost exclusively for their own use. Using only the finest clays, they achieved a finely textured body whose color was extraordinarily pure. Most of the production was devoted to matched porcelains for table settings, the majority of which consisted of shallow dishes with short stands used for serving the principal courses at formal meals. These are ceramic versions of forms once more commonly seen in lacquer. Molds or templates were employed to assure uniform shape and size. Motifs had to be reproduced again and again, so a transfer system using tracing paper and charcoal evolved. Many of the designs were taken from textile patterns found in copybooks.

In this dish an underglaze blue was used to create the wave pattern and the peonies, while the flowers and leaves are painted in red, yellow, and light green overglazes. The polychrome overglaze enamels are known in Japanese as *aka-e* or *iro-e*. Nowhere on the plate is there a faulty line or miscue. Such precision is one of the great glories of Nabeshima ware.

Sakaida Kakiemon was the first to succeed in producing overglaze-enamel porcelains in Japan. This he accomplished about 1644. Thereafter indigenous wares could compete with the highly popular and expensive Chinese examples. The very fine and important ceramic culture of Korea was no competition, for the Koreans did not produce overglaze-enamel porcelains. The finest Kakiemon wares are known for their glossy, milky white ground and attention to precise execution. In this covered bowl there is a conventionalized relief decoration of crested waves over which a transparent white glaze has been applied. Plovers

and sprays of chrysanthemums have been scattered in overglaze decoration. It is a poetic vision of flowers floating in a stream with birds flying overhead. The stream itself has a three-dimensional quality. The interior of the bowl is decorated with a phoenix and jewels in a medallion, which marks it as a very rare specimen. The open composition is very typical of Japanese design.

Bowls of this design are presumed to have been made for serving soup. Following the Japanese convention, they were made in sets of five. Three additional identical bowls may be found in the Freer Gallery, Washington, D.C.; the Cleveland Museum of Art; and the Tokyo National Museum.

Kakiemon ware was never a common export item. Its designs were highly refined, elegant, and sophisticated. Many pieces were commissioned by wealthy citizens. Kakiemon, Imari, Nabeshima, and Hirasa are among the most important wares from the area around Arita.







. 114 .

ARTIST UNKNOWN

Japanese

Momoyama period (1568–1614)

The River Bridge at Uji (Uji bashi)

One of a pair of six-fold screens,
color, ink, and gold on paper

67¹/₂ × 133¹/₄ in (171.5 × 338.5 cm)

Museum purchase: acquired 1958

. 115 .

KAIHŌ YŪSHŌ

Japanese, 1533–1615

Momoyama period (1568–1614)

Pine and Plum by Moonlight

Pair of six-fold screens; ink and slight color on paper

66¹/₂ × 139 in each (168.9 × 353.1 cm)

Museum purchase: acquired 1958

The Momoyama period in Japan was marked by opulence in all of the arts—architecture, textiles, ceramics, lacquerware, and particularly screens. Following the Chinese, the Japanese folding screen continued to be designed as a series of separate panels far into the fourteenth century. However, as paper began to replace silk and as an inconspicuous paper hinge replaced the old leather and silk model, the design evolved into the continuous format seen in these beautiful specimens. In addition to the evolution of the format, the silk borders and lacquered frames around each panel were eliminated, creating an expansive, unimpeded surface.

The structure of Japanese folding screens looks simple, but it is the result of a complicated arrangement of paper and wood. The wooden frame is usually made of cypress or cryptomeria. This is covered on both sides with several layers of paper. Each layer is cut in a special way and performs a specific function. One layer, for example, is called the “breathing layer” and is designed to allow the screen to react to changes in humidity without undue stress. There are six hinges to a fold and they are designed so that the panels may fold in both directions. After the hinges are affixed, two more very thin layers of paper are applied, one laid horizontally and the other vertically. These cover the paper hinges.

The paintings themselves are traditionally painted on the floor and then pasted onto the screen. Various finishing details and embellishments further enhance the screen: pat-

terned papers for the back, lacquer rails for the perimeter, and metal hardware at the corners. The design is deceptively simple, but the screen is extraordinarily durable and adaptable to the creative inventions of the decorative instincts of the Japanese.

The screens usually consisted of six panels, although eight-panel screens are not unknown. They were often designed in pairs, in which case the subject was read from right to left. In the traditionally neutral interior of a Japanese house, which had little furniture, floors covered with tatami mats, and walls of paper, a beautifully designed screen would have maximum impact.

In addition to the opulence of its arts, the Momoyama period was one of continual military struggle. A new kind of castle architecture had developed in the fifteenth century, constructed by members of the increasingly complex warrior society. Such a structure could easily have as many as one hundred rooms. In the mid-sixteenth century further architectural modifications came about with the introduction of firearms by the Portuguese. The castles were fortified with thick walls and small windows, resulting in interiors that were dark and gloomy. Screens such as the pair representing the bridge at Uji, with their gold, light-reflective surfaces, brightened and enhanced these rooms. Indeed, the use of gold on screens was perfected during the Momoyama period. Specimens like these might have been employed in a great audience hall, where they would be most impressive.

The Uji Bridge was famous from Heian times in literature and art and was a favorite theme of Momoyama- and Edo-period decorative painters. The boldness of the continuous composition spans both surfaces to create a dazzling conception. The bridge arcs impressively amidst sinuous trees and low-lying clouds. The baskets along the shore—presumably filled with rocks to keep the bank from eroding—introduce yet another textural contrast into the composition.

Kaihō Yūshō was among the most celebrated artists of the Momoyama period. Probably a pupil of Kanō Motonobu, he excelled in pure ink paintings. Examples like *Pine and Plum by Moonlight* were favored for use in Zen Buddhist temples. This monochrome style reflects the Chinese tradition of the thirteenth century. The brush strokes are elegant and strong. The infinitely graded ink washes are controlled and sophisticated. The composition is dramatic and considered among Kaihō Yūshō's greatest masterpieces. Slight color has been added to the plum blossoms and the camellia. The artist was so original in his compositions that he is credited with founding his own school, the Kaihō School, which continued with great vigor into the eighteenth century.

In addition to paired folding screens, two other kinds of screens were produced by the Japanese. *Tsuitate*, a single panel screen, is the earliest format. Such a screen typically was placed at the entrances to buildings or used as a ceremonial backdrop for a throne. *Fusuma* were an invention of the eighth and ninth centuries. In traditional Japanese domestic architecture, there were no masonry-bearing walls. Inside there were few stationary walls. The result was an architecture that was light and airy with an extremely flexible open interior space. This interior could be partitioned with *fusuma*, which were set into grooved tracks on the floor and in the overhead beams. Such screens were usually large, six feet high and three to four feet wide, and became an integral element of Japanese interior design. Because they were made of highly flammable materials and because of their inherent architectural function, few *fusuma* remain. The third format, of which the paired folding screens are examples, is called *byōbu*, which can be translated as "protection from the wind." These hinged panels can stand alone to provide privacy in the open-plan Japanese house as well as protection from the sun and wind. They might also be used as backdrops for important occasions, much like the earlier *tsuitate*.





. 116.

Ewer

Japanese

Muromachi period (1392–1567)

Fifteenth century

Negoro lacquer

14¹/₂ in high; 14¹/₂ in wide; 17 in diameter at base;

6 in diameter of lid (36.2 × 36.2 × 43.2 × 15.2 cm)

Acquired through the generosity of the Edith Ehrman

Memorial Fund: 1980

. 117.

IZUKA TŌYŌ

Japanese, active 1760–1780

Tiered Writing Box (suzuri-bako)

Made about 1775 for the So family; signed *Kanshōsai*,

with flourish mark

Various lacquer techniques on wood

8¹/₂ × 13³/₄ × 8¹/₄ in (21.5 × 35 × 21 cm)

Acquired through the generosity of David T. Beals III:

1978

Although actual dates are difficult to verify, the tradition of Japanese lacquerwork may date from the third century B.C. From the earliest times lacquer was not applied merely as a protective covering but was utilized for its decorative possibilities as well. As a major art form, however, it did not come into its own until the sixth century A.D.

The technique of *negoro-nuri* originated in the last decade of the thirteenth century and came to full flower in the Muromachi period (1392–1567). The term was derived from the temple of Negoro, where in 1288 Bishop Raiyu Sōjō set up shop to produce lacquer objects for the local priests' daily use. It has come to describe objects with a characteristically thick layer of red lacquer, which through long use has worn away to reveal the underlayer of black lacquer. Additionally, the term may be used to describe objects made with red lacquer in combination with either transparent lacquer or black lacquer not used as a base for the red. The effect of the red wearing through to black was so highly prized that modern wares attempt to imitate it.

In the ewer the red lacquer has worn away to reveal the black underlayer (see the shoulder). The shape of the vessel is simple. Horizontal bands just above and below the spout

emphasize the body. The restrained linearity of the vessel and its elegant handle are very pleasing to the eye. Line, form, and color have been combined to produce an object of sublime refinement and beauty.

Between 1600 and 1900 most of the important lacquerers came from families whose profession was lacquering. As with many other professions, the skill was transferred from one generation to another. Indeed, a strict code of conduct was written by Koami Nagasuku (1661–1723). Nagasuku represented the twelfth generation of the oldest and most respected of the lacquer families. Likewise, the Tōyō were an important lacquer family, as were the En'ami and the Kajikawa, who were official lacquerers to the shogun. The shoguns, or military rulers, were the prime patrons of the lacquerers. As many as twenty-five lacquerers might be on retainer to a single shogun. The variety of items made by the lacquerers might include furniture, saddles, clogs, kimono racks, and toilet sets of basins and pitchers. *Inrō*, small containers for seals and ink, or later for medicines, were made of lacquer and suspended from a sash (or *obi*) at the waist with cords. Beautiful writing boxes such as the museum's example were also products of the lacquerer's art.



Izuka Tōyō was very active in the 1760s and 1770s. He worked for Hachisuka Shigeyoshi (1738–1801), lord of Tokushima. The novelty and originality of his designs are extraordinary. He enjoyed pushing the technical and inventive capabilities of the medium to the limit. In the writing box, where he employed a variety of lacquer techniques, we see his inventive nature. He depended primarily upon the suspension of gold and silver flakes and powder in the layers of lacquer in order to create his best effects. Fine layers of metal lie close to the surface under a transparent coating or in an upper layer of an opaque colored lacquer. Irregular geometric zones form striking compositions that are accentuated with brilliant color, and natural motifs, including clouds, snowflakes, and pines, have been refined into decorative abstractions.

This *suzuri-bako*, or small writing box, is tiered in design and fitted with two trays, a silver water dropper, and an inkstone. It seems to have been an example of great technical skill and beauty to be admired, for there is no evidence of use. When a writing box is used, water is poured from the water dropper onto the inkstone, where it accumulates in a well at the top. The inkstick, in combination with some of the water, is rubbed on the flat surface of the stone in order

to make the ink. Trays hold the inkstick, brushes, a paper knife, and a paper punch. In the most lavish boxes these utensils have lacquer handles, which themselves relate in some fashion to the overall design of the box itself. Writing boxes are often seen in Japanese paintings. Often the lids have been turned over to serve as small trays.

In order to make the box, layers of lacquer are laid over a wooden core. It is critical that the wood for the core be very carefully chosen and dried, sometimes for several years, so that it not warp with age. The quality of the core matters little when the box is new, but over the long term it is extremely important. On top of this core several layers of foundation lacquer are laid down to seal it and to provide a smooth surface upon which the metal powders and flakes can be laid down in wet lacquer. Once the metal particles harden in the lacquer, successive layers of lacquer are applied, and the finished product might be lightly polished with sticks of charcoal. The metal particles can be seen through the translucent lacquer. Lacquer workers were traditionally among the most conservative of all artisans and reused designs for generations. In view of this tendency, Tōyō's artistic inventiveness is all the more remarkable.





. 118.

Standing Buddha

Thai, found near Chiang Mai, North Thailand
Dvaravati style (seventh–eighth centuries A.D.)

Gray limestone

51½ × 18 in (130.8 × 45.7 cm)

Museum purchase: acquired 1935

. 119.

Standing Buddha

India

Gupta period, A.D. 320–600

Mathura school, fifth century A.D.

Red sandstone

45¼ × 20½ in (114.9 × 52.1 cm)

Museum purchase: acquired 1945

. 120.

Celestial Nymph (surasundari)

Indian, from Khajuraho, Madhya Pradesh, probably from
the Mahadeva temple

Chandella dynasty (tenth–twelfth centuries A.D.)

Tenth century A.D.

Buff sandstone

23¾ in high (60.4 cm)

Bequest of Mrs. George H. Bunting, Jr.: 1981

Before the Thai people gained political supremacy, much of their current territory was occupied by the Mons, who were Buddhists. The most important Mon kingdom, Dvaravati, established in the river valleys of central Thailand, lasted from about the seventh to the eleventh century A.D.

Dvaravati sculptors were very much influenced by Indian examples, especially by work from the Gupta and post-Gupta periods. The conventions governing the representation of the standing stone Buddhas vary little. The basic distinguishing characteristic is the positioning of the hands. Unfortunately, in this example both arms are missing. It seems probable, however, that it would have fit the standard Dvaravati type with both hands raised in a teaching gesture. In some examples, the left hand grasps the edge of the robe. Pleated fragments of the robe, which covers both shoulders, are visible at the lower right of the image. Although the garment is not detailed in a highly naturalistic fashion, it is clear that it represents the simple clothing characteristic of monastic dress. The transparent fabric that reveals the subtly modeled body is a Gupta influence. The figure is conceived frontally, and its architectonic masses reveal its maker's fundamental understanding of form. The slight sideward thrust of the hips is another element derived from Gupta examples.

The facial features are clearly, yet subtly, outlined, with the swallow-tail eyebrows joining above the bridge of the nose. The serene face, representing a typical Mon physiognomy, becomes a generalized portrait whose eyes are lowered to address the suppliant in a spirit of restrained benevolence. The hair is represented by the snail-shaped curls which cover a flattened *ushnisha*, or seat of intellectual faculties. The sensuous lips turn up in a barely perceptible smile. The implied relationship between the viewer and the deity is immediately apparent.

The red sandstone torso of a Buddha from the fifth century A.D. is an excellent example of the Gupta style. Although now devoid of its head, hands, and feet, it displays the power and sublime beauty of the classic age of Indian sculpture. This type of image became the prototype for all of East and Southeast Asia.

The close-fitting, transparent drapery of the monastic robes reveals the body underneath. The folds of the garment have been translated into parallel, looping ridges. It is these folds combined with the diaphanous drapery that characterize the Mathura style. The drapery has a rhythmic pattern that is appealing to modern eyes more accustomed to stylization.

Quite unlike the sublimely abstract figure of the Gupta Buddha is the *Celestial Nymph* of the Chandella dynasty of the tenth century. The Hindu context from which she comes accounts in large part for the stylistic differences. While the draperies are still highly stylized and quite diaphanous, the figure is no longer asexual. The torso is now full and supple. The thin garment of this heavenly maiden slips from her hips, assisted by the headless figure who pulls at it from below while the maiden attempts to bind up her long hair.

The exteriors of medieval Indian temples were richly embellished with sculptural programs depicting figures from a wide pantheon of deities. In addition to these deified creatures, the program included all manner of animals and earthly beings. The rich life of the entire universe was depicted. The figures are voluptuous and demonstrate the artist's predilection for rhythmic patterns and lines.

The museum's nymph possesses the characteristic features of the Khajuraho temple figures. Her eyes are extremely elongated and her eyebrows arch like the curve of a bow. The nose is long and pointed and the enigmatic mouth is unsmiling.





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Shiva Vishapaharana
(*The Lord Who Swallowed the World*
Poison)

Indian, from Andhra Pradesh
Eastern Chalukya dynasty (ninth–tenth centuries A.D.)
Bronze
19¹/₄ in high (49 cm)
Museum purchase: acquired 1950

. 1 2 2 .

Shiva Nataraja (The Dancing Lord)

Indian, from Tamilnadu
Later Chola dynasty (early thirteenth century A.D.)
Bronze
33¹/₂ in high (85 cm)
Museum purchase: acquired 1934

. 1 2 3 .

Karaikkalammaiya, A Shaiva Saint

Indian
Vijayanagar period (fifteenth century A.D.)
Bronze
16¹/₄ in high (41.3 cm)
Museum purchase: acquired 1933

. 1 2 4 .

Tree of Life

Southern Indian
Vijayanagar period (late sixteenth–seventeenth centuries A.D.)
Bronze
24 in high (59.9 cm)
Museum purchase: acquired 1941

While the exteriors of Indian temples have rich sculptural programs and the bulk of Indian sculpture that survives is in stone, other materials, especially bronze, were put to sculptural use as well. The museum's collection of Indian bronzes is so strong that nearly every major style from the second through the fifteenth centuries is represented.

These works were all made by the *cire perdue*, or lost-wax, process and are both technically and aesthetically superb. Made for religious purposes, often as processional images, figures such as *Shiva Vishapaharana* were small and portable. They were created to the specifications of well-known and precisely prescribed canons. They were used in accordance with an expressly defined order of devotion, which included the presentation of flowers and perfumes, meditation, and the uttering of oaths and magical formulas. Until the twentieth century the meaning of these beautiful but perplexing figures was not known to Westerners, but the sculptures could still be appreciated for their aesthetic qualities.

This four-armed, three-eyed figure of Shiva represents the occasion when the god swallowed some especially vicious poison rather than let it harm mankind. His upper hands hold an axe and a deer; his lower right hand holds a rosary; the lower left a *naga*, or snake. In this incarnation

Shiva often holds a cup of poison. Here the *naga* takes the place of the cup. The god wears his usual coiffure, a "crown of matted hair," in which there appear a crescent moon, a skull, and another *naga*. His short garment is held in place by a belt and a fabric girdle elaborately tied at the sides and falling in streamers. He is further bedecked with earrings, necklaces, *naga* armlets, wrist bangles, and anklebands.

Conceived as planar rather than volumetric forms, the figure is essentially frontal in presentation. The flanges of drapery further emphasize this conception. The god stands rigidly on a lotus pedestal, which rests on a square plinth embellished with architectural moldings. The upright bars on this base would have supported an elaborate halo or aureole, which was cast separately. The softly defined, youthful body of the figure is delicately modeled, and the back is as beautiful as the front.

In many religious sects the spiritual leaders and gods must renounce the flesh, at least symbolically—in the Christian faith this is done with the tonsure worn by priests and monks; the Luohans of Buddhism shave their heads completely. By contrast, Shiva's hair is not shaved but instead is piled and knotted on his head and often adorned with symbolic images. The skull, for example, is symbolic of death; the crescent moon of birth and growth.



Another incarnation of Shiva is that of *Nataraja, the Dancing Lord*. In the museum's Chola dynasty bronze he performs the dance of joy with one leg on the dwarf Apasmara. The other leg he raises in front and bends at the knee. He has four arms, which separate at the shoulder. Having several arms allows the god to display the various attributes that more fully suggest his powers. In his upraised right hand he holds a small drum between his thumb and third finger. This drum, shaped like an hourglass, is used to beat the rhythm of his dance. It is an allegory for sound, the first stage of creation, the vehicle of speech, the conveyer of revelation, tradition, incantation, magic, and divine truth. In the palm of his upraised left hand he holds a lotus. A five-pointed flame rises from the flower. The flame represents the destruction of the world. Creation and destruction are thus balanced against each other. Both are governed by this dancing lord.

The *mudra*, or symbolic hand gestures, speak further to the viewer. The second right hand is held in the "fear not" gesture, which bestows peace and protection. The second left hand extends toward the upraised foot, pointing the way toward release from problems of the visible world. The demon upon which Shiva dances is Forgetfulness or Heedlessness, symbolic of life's blindness and man's ignorance. A ring of flames and light once encircled the god,

representing the vital processes of the universe.

Karaikkalammaiyyar was a real person who lived in the mid-sixth century A.D. Known in life as Punitavati, daughter of a village chieftain and wife of a rich merchant, she was a devoted follower of Shiva who frequently gave gifts to the ascetics who worshiped him. One day Punitavati's husband received two mangoes as a gift. He sent them home to his wife to be stored. Soon an ascetic arrived begging for food, and she gave him one of the mangoes. At noon her husband came home for his midday meal. He ate one of the mangoes and finding it so delicious he asked for the other. In her distress Punitavati prayed to Shiva and miraculously another mango appeared. When she told her husband of this miracle, he became fearful of her supernatural powers and abandoned her. No longer needing her physical beauty, Punitavati asked Shiva to take it away and to give her the body of the demons who worship at the god's feet. This he did, and she took on the appearance of an emaciated hag. She became known as Karaikkalammaiyyar, mother of Karikal, which was her home village. The once-beautiful woman is portrayed here as a demoness. She has shriveled breasts, projecting veins, protruding eyes, fangs, and a hollow stomach. She holds a pair of cymbals in her hands with which she traditionally accompanies the dance of Shiva whom she devoutly worships.







Although certain effects changed over the centuries, the general style of Indian bronzes remained essentially the same for nearly a thousand years. The Chola dynasty and the Vijayanagar period represent the high point of bronze casting. The museum's unique *Tree of Life* demonstrates the variety of subjects found in Indian bronzes. The Tree of Life represents all of the life-giving forces of the universe. It is in the overall shape of the sacred banyan tree, which is a symbol of the male, spiritual, and ethereal elements of life. Its trunk represents the stem of a lotus, a female symbol, suggestive of the earth and watery places.

The tree is conceived in two dimensions. Its curving trunk has seven branches on either side. These extend from the trunk in lazy, elongated S-shaped curves. Each branch is

joined by stylized leaves growing from the branch below and terminates in a bulbous fruit upon which a wild goose feeds. The fourteen geese represent individual souls who partake of this life but have the freedom to escape.

At the base of the tree are two confronted bovines (fertility symbols) represented three-dimensionally. Halfway up the trunk of the tree two long-tailed monkeys have perched to pick and eat fruit. They may represent the masses of living creatures that inhabit the Tree of Life. In the center of the branches is a double rosette surmounted by a coiled, five-headed serpent. In this context both elements are employed as solar symbols. The tree and its accompanying symbols suggest all of creation, giving special attention to the life of the individual within the cosmic whole.

گریزان شما سوار باشند مرد
 چنین گفت کین نوذر ناج دار
 بر آشفته کفنا کی نوذر جاست
 بدشت آوردندش از نیمه خوار
 ز ستم و ز تور اندر آمد نخست
 بز کردن خسرو نامدار

بر فشت از آن تو کرد نبرد
 بریدش خواری سوی کشته زار
 گز و ویشه خواهد می کینه خوا
 بر هفته سرو پای و بر کشته کار
 دل و دیده از شرم شاهان نیست
 نقش را خاک اندر افکند خوار

سوی شاه ترکان رسید اکن
 چه جاست جز خون او یختن
 سبهدار نوذر جواکاه شد
 کشتند از جای پیش تنک

کشتن افراسیاب نوذر را

دلش گشت بر آسود و در غم
 اگر چرخ کرد از کشتن زین
 سباهی بر از غفلت و کشت و کز
 جواز دور دیدش زبان بر کشاد
 تو گفت هر بد کی آید نه است
 شد آن مادر کار سوخته شاه

دوزخ را ز خون جگر داد نسیم
 سر انجام خشتت با این تو
 سوی شاه نوذر نهادند و
 زین تیاکان می کرد یاد
 بگفت و بر آشفته و ششیر خوا
 تو ماند ایران ز تخت و کلاه



ایاد انی مرد بسیار هوش
 چه جوی ازین تیره خاک نرند
 بدو گفت کین چیست کان کینه
 سر دگر نباشد جان نشان کرد
 بخواری ناری بر آند هوش
 ز پیش دستان سوی کشت
 بششیر تیز آن سر نامدار
 سوی زابلستان نهادند روی

کی تحت و کلاه جز قیاس یارید
 پس از استکان از کشته دوزار
 کین تیر سوار از و کرد سوار
 بر ایشان یکی غار زندان کنم
 بفرمودشان تاب ساری بند
 کلاه کلاه بیست بر نهاد
 بکند روی و شودند روی
 بر زال رفتند با سول و دژ

چنین داستان چند خوا می شنید
 بجان خواسته یک بیک زینهار
 ندان ترک و جوشن نه در کار زار
 نه دازشان هوشندان کنم
 بغل و قمر از و زاری بر بند
 بدینار دادند در اندر کشاد
 از اوان بر آمدی های هوی
 رحمان بر خون و سران پر ز کرد

رسیدی جای کی شتافتی
 جواغیرت آمد خواهر کری
 گرفت از کشتن و والا بود
 بخشود جان شان بخت از او
 جوایز کرده شد ساز رفت گرفت
 بکسبتم و طوس آمد ایرا کھی
 سر سر کشتان کشتن بر کرد
 که در ادلیر شاهانود را

سر آمد کرد و آرزوی یافتی
 بیازاست با مور کاوری
 نشیمنت جایی که بالا بود
 جویشتند زاری و بیکار او
 زمین زین اسبان هفتن گرفت
 کی شدیم دیهیم شاه هشی
 همه دیدن خون و همه هشی
 کواماج دارا امکا داورا

Afrasiyab Killing Naudar

Persian (Iran), from Tabriz

c.1335-1336

Manuscript page from the "Demotte" *Shah-nama*,
watercolor and ink with gold and silver leaf on paper

15⁷/₈ × 11¹/₂ in page size (40.3 × 29.2 cm)

11³/₈ × 8⁵/₁₆ in miniature size (21.3 × 22.8 cm)

Museum purchase: acquired 1955

Calligraphy has always been held in especially high regard in the Islamic world. Written texts were often enriched through illumination or illustration. The finest miniatures come from the libraries of princes and other aristocratic figures. Because of the interdictions of Islam, the range of subject matter chosen for illustration is somewhat limited. The *Shah-nama*, or *Book of Kings*, histories of the Mongols, romances, fables, and scientific treatises represent the bulk of the illustrated texts.

The conveyance of a mood more than the documentation of fact is a primary motivation for painters of miniatures, although the scenes do present a truthful depiction of an age. The volumetric, plastic representation of objects is not generally a concern, nor is space necessarily depicted from a single point of view. The brilliant colors are often enhanced with gold and silver and have kept their original intensity in most cases, so the miniatures have a jewellike quality and their detail is often extraordinary.

The "Demotte" *Shah-nama*, or *Book of Kings*, takes its name from the Parisian dealer, Georges Demotte, who broke up the manuscript about 1913 to sell the leaves separately. It is thought that this particular version was copied and illustrated in Tabriz, the Mongol capital, about 1335-1336. It was commissioned by Ghiyath al-Din, Muhammad, who served as vizier from 1328 until his death in 1336. His father, Rashid al-Din, had organized an important school of

painting in Tabriz in the early fourteenth century. This book seems to have been commissioned as a propaganda tool to legitimize a questionable succession to the Mongol throne. The succession was unsuccessful and the manuscript was never completed.

As in the great scriptoria of the Middle Ages in Europe, the illustrations were created by more than one artist. Evidence does not exist for conclusive attributions to specific artists, although many names have been linked to this work. Its rich coloring is typical of earlier Mongol painting, but more animation and insight into character, as well as a concern for details of landscape are evident.

The *Shah-nama* is one of the most discussed manuscripts in the entire history of Persian painting. Afrasiyab, the son of the king of Turan, has captured Naudar, the king of Persia, and is about to have him beheaded. Naudar kneels while the scimitar is lifted ominously over his head. A crowd looks on. A tent is seen at the upper left, and at the right two bearded figures watch the scene partly obscured by a swirling rock formation.

The text was composed in the Persian language by Firdausi (c.935-1020), a native of Khurasan in northeast Persia. The *Shah-nama* was completed about 1010 and presented to Sultan Mahmud (r. 998-1030) of Ghazni, who was then ruling over the author's homeland. This particular scene is rarely included in the *Shah-nama* before 1500.

'ABD ALLAH MUSAWWIR

Persian (Iran), active mid-sixteenth century until 1575

The Meeting of the Theologians

Painted at Bukhara (U.S.S.R.) c.1540-1549

Colors on paper

13 × 9 in page size (33 × 22.9 cm)

11³/₈ × 7¹/₂ in miniature size (28.9 × 19.1 cm)

Museum purchase: acquired 1943

Persian painting is unique in character. It does not dwell on the supremacy of people as does much Western art, nor on the supremacy of landscape as is the case in many Chinese paintings. It is unabashedly romantic, concerned with epic tales of heroic or sacred stories in which marvelous and incredible feats accomplished by protagonists with super-human abilities are everyday fare.

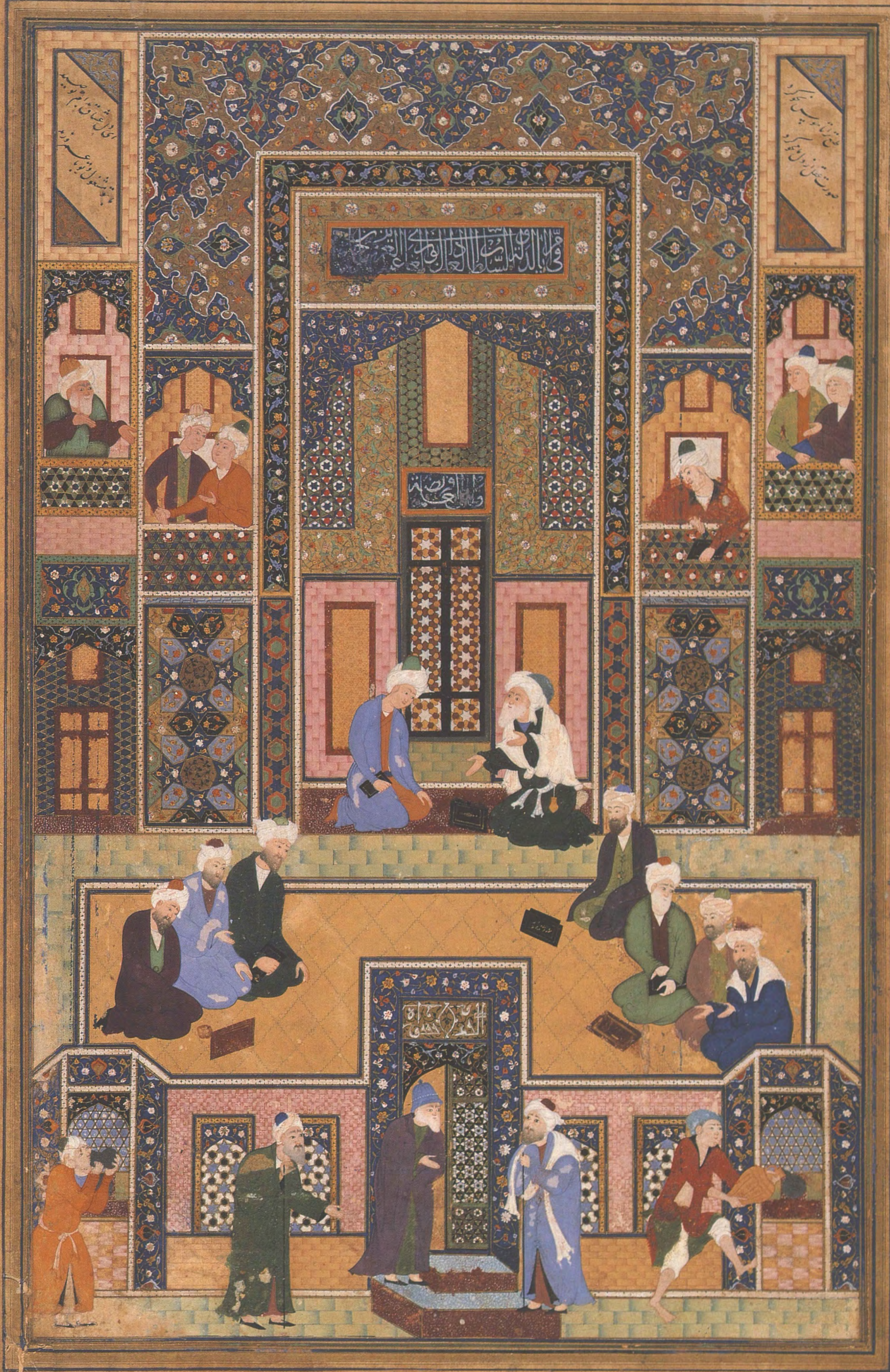
Employing patterns, rhythmic designs, and intoxicatingly brilliant colors enhanced with gold, the Persian painter wrought illustrated pages of jewellike quality. Many of the pigments used in these paintings were made by grinding minerals such as gold, silver, lapis lazuli and malachite. This exquisitely rich palette he used to cover entire pages with complicated patterns in which the individual elements are subordinated in favor of a harmonious whole.

Since these pages were meant to be held in the hand and examined at close range, not only the illustrated page itself but the entire volume represented an object of stunning beauty crafted with careful attention to detail. The process of completing one great book could take many years, and it represented an important symbiosis of patrons, calligraphers and artists. These beautiful books were important to people who spent much of their time living in tents as they followed game or fought battles. They were immeasurable

enhancements to their peripatetic and often bleak existence.

Because Persian painters were not compelled to feel that a painting should accurately represent visual appearances, they eschewed atmospheric effects, modeling by means of light and dark, and the scientific understanding of perspective and human anatomy, concentrating instead on a sense of beauty and the intricacies of design.

In *The Meeting of the Theologians*, we are reminded that the Persians had not adopted the Western system of perspective but frequently utilized more than one point of view in a single composition. It is a very useful device allowing for the presentation of more than one event simultaneously. This scene takes place in a *madrasa*, or religious school, where a young man is seated with a *mulla*, or teacher, and seven other bearded men. At the doorway a theologian approaches while two beggars extend their hands for alms. The name of the artist is inscribed on the book lying on the floor in front of the man seated above the upper right corner of the entrance door. The date is determined by the inscription above the uppermost doorway: "in the days of the reign of the most just sultan Abu'l Ghazi 'Abd al-'Aziz Bahadur Khan." His rule over the Uzbeks lasted from 1540 to 1549 and coincided with one of the most prolific periods for painting in Bukhara.



ATTRIBUTED TO LAL
Indian (Mughal)
Akbar (1556–1605) and Jahāngīr (1605–1627) periods

The Poet and the Prince

1595–1597
A leaf from an album of Jahāngīr
Mounted in an album with borders (1599–1609),
opaque watercolor and gold on paper
16⁵/₈ × 10¹/₂ in page size (42.2 × 26.7 cm)
8³/₄ × 4¹/₂ in miniature size (22.3 × 11.5 cm)
Museum purchase: acquired 1948

The Mughals arrived in India from Central Asia in the early sixteenth century, but it was not until the reign of Akbar that the arts had any great importance in their culture. This album leaf of *The Poet and the Prince*, executed near the end of Akbar's reign, combines the decorative features inherited from Persia with a naturalism, perhaps borrowed from European painting, that became a hallmark of Mughal style.

Akbar and his son Jahāngīr emphasized the arts and patronized them well. Under their protection, a tradition of court painters working in seclusion to produce paintings for royal patrons was established. Akbar was an enlightened patron, and his son, inspired by his father's dedication, endeavored to surpass his accomplishments. As a result, Mughal painting reached its peak. Helpful also was the fact that the Mughal empire was enjoying a period of relative calm. Time and resources could be devoted to the refinement of painting.

Jahāngīr commissioned and supervised the creation of several albums of miniature paintings and calligraphy for his own use. These were originally composed of pairs of miniature paintings alternated with paired examples of calligraphy. Each painting was framed by narrow bands of brilliant patterns resembling those of contemporary Persian carpets. The large pages on which the painting and its borders were mounted were illuminated with floral arabesques or mountain landscapes superimposed with delicately painted birds and animals or human figures hunting wild game, sitting at leisure, or otherwise occupied.

Here we see figures in a landscape punctuated by Persian cypresses and a flowering tree. Rolling hills and a walled city in the distance reflect European influences. Against the blue sky, streaked with orange and gold clouds, flocks of birds take wing. The palette is brilliant. The rich hues of the costumes against the green ground is masterful. We know the young man is a prince by the plume in his turban and the scarf that is held by his attendant. The man facing the prince is a poet and classical scholar. The grass was painted one blade at a time over washes of blue, yellow, and green. Distant trees are wisps of blues and reds.

The convoluted rock forms of Mughal painting often contain hidden animals or people. In the lower right corner, just below and to the left of the birds, we note an upturned face in profile. Miniatures like this were meant to be held in the hand and studied at close range. In such a context the infinitely precise nature of the work takes on new meaning.

Many of the Jahāngīr albums display copies of European paintings and engravings made at Jahāngīr's request. Jahāngīr was a dedicated collector with a wide-ranging appetite. The integration of European and Persian motifs seems somewhat bizarre at first glance, but it demonstrates what one scholar has called Jahāngīr's "highly sophisticated imagination." Jahāngīr developed a very particular vision, which his court atelier then executed at his direction. *The Poet and the Prince* could have been painted in Allahabad before Jahāngīr became emperor, for he was already patronizing painting in the late 1590s.





Tapestry-Woven Medallion Rug

Persian (Iran), from Kashan

First quarter of seventeenth century

Warp, silk; weft, silk, gold, and silver

95 1/2 x 61 1/2 in (242.6 x 156.2 cm)

Museum purchase: acquired 1932

It has been said that the carpet is Persia's greatest contribution to art. Certainly this extraordinary specimen reinforces such a claim. Known as a "Polonaise" carpet it was made for the court of the great Safavid ruler Shah Abbas I (1580-1620). Luxurious rugs of this type, woven of silk with silver and gold threads, were first known from the collection of Prince Czartoryski in Poland, and for many years it was assumed that they were of Polish manufacture.

It is generally thought that the factories for the production of "Polonaise" carpets were in operation for about fifty years, from the end of the sixteenth century to the middle of the seventeenth. The design is created by silk threads tied in Persian knots. The pile is clipped so closely that they could never have been used on the floor. Another unique feature of this group of carpets is that they do not have fringes. This may indicate an aesthetic decision on the part of the Persians or it may be a result of the construction itself. Because of their great beauty and fine craftsmanship, these rugs

were frequently selected as gifts for foreign ambassadors and heads of state.

Little or no documentation exists in Iran to help solve the mysteries of the manufacture of these rugs under Shah Abbas I. Their overall effect is that of pastel-colored carpets with baroque designs made up of altered Persian motifs. Although the dominant coloration appears to be pastel, it is deceiving; upon closer examination, carmine reds, emerald greens, and deep blues are evident. One color that is used in great profusion is salmon pink. It is a somewhat fugitive color and may, indeed, have had a much deeper hue originally, which would have changed the color character of these carpets considerably.

Here the central field is of exquisitely drawn leaves and blossoms dominated by a large quatrefoil medallion below which a pair of leopards each attack a deer. In the seventeenth century carpets like this were favored by the nobility and well-to-do connoisseurs.

Funerary Urn

Mexican (Zapotec), from Monte Albán
 Epoch III A (A.D. 500–700)
 Terra-cotta with traces of polychromy
 25 in (63.5 cm)
 Museum purchase: acquired 1961

Oaxaca is a state in southern Mexico facing the Pacific Ocean. In pre-Spanish times it was home to the Zapotec and Mixtec cultures. More than two hundred ancient towns and cities existed in the region — testament to a once-flourishing civilization. Monte Albán is the most impressive and the most studied site in the great Oaxaca Valley. Centrally located and highly defensible, the precinct rises at the juncture of three spectacular valleys. Evidence remains of an irrigation system that allowed for the intensive cultivation of the surrounding area. A highly differentiated and complex culture developed here. Monte Albán seems to have been the political center of the Zapotec culture during the Classic period (Epoch III).

A common belief of Mesoamerican peoples was that at birth each person was given his own guardian spirit or alter ego, known as the *nahualli* in the native tongue or, as it became Anglicized, the “nagual.” The nagual of a person or god was often an animal such as a serpent or an owl, but it could also be a flower or the morning star or even the East Wind. In the Oaxacan culture, the nagual was often depicted in the form of masks on the headdresses of the figures on urns and braziers.

On this urn a young male figure displays his headdress, which bears a stylized representation of the face of the goddess Quetzal. (The quetzal is a breathtakingly beautiful bird indigenous to the higher altitudes of Mexico and Central America. Its plumage, color, and streamerlike tail make

it unforgettable. This extraordinary creature was deified and became a symbol venerated by many of the peoples of Mesoamerica.) The motif is flanked bilaterally by the head, body, wings, and tailfeathers of the goddess who is portrayed as if she is looking out of her mask, or nagual, as she flies over the earth. The figure holds a purse or copal incense container in his left hand and in his right the ceremonial baton and rattle known as the *chicahuaztli*. He wears typical body ornaments as well as ear spools and a nose ornament suspended from the septum.

The actual purpose served by these vessels is still unclear. Most of them were found arranged on the floors of tombs or in their antechambers. Others were found in niches or in the facades of tombs. Because of this association they became known as funerary urns. They vary in size from a few inches to nearly six feet and they share a basic form: an open cylinder with a figure on the front. Great numbers were destroyed during the Spanish Conquest and the succeeding Counter-Reformation. Natural disasters destroyed still others. In spite of all of the destruction, however, several thousand examples still remain.

The terra-cotta urns were often treated with a color wash, and the figures were highlighted with pigments. White, black, blue, yellow, and possibly green were commonly used over a base of red. Red is the color that has best survived time and the chemical reactions of the earth in which the urns were buried.





*Plaque Depicting Nobleman and
Attendants*

West African (Nigeria), Benin kingdom (fourteenth–
seventeenth centuries A.D.)

Sixteenth–seventeenth centuries A.D.

Bronze

14³/₄ × 15¹/₂ in (37.5 × 39.4 cm)

Museum purchase: acquired 1958

In 1897 a British punitive expedition destroyed the capital of Benin in retaliation for the death of a British consul and his companions who had defiantly entered the capital during a religious festival. During the destruction of the capital the invaders managed to strip the palace and the storehouses of their treasures, which they then shipped to England and the Continent. Europeans were mystified by the extraordinary quality and sophistication of the bronzes they were seeing from the Benin culture. They had all been made by the *cire perdue* process, a method that yields only a single example from each casting. More than two thousand pieces had been sent to Europe.

Bronze casting in sub-Saharan Africa is an ancient tradition. It is a difficult process requiring great finesse. In the *cire perdue* method a detailed model is made in wax, usually over a core of clay. The wax model is covered with several layers of potter's clay. Each layer is allowed to dry before the next is applied. A final layer of clay encases the whole. When all is dry, the wax is melted out and replaced with molten metal. When the metal has cooled, the clay is broken

away. In place of the wax is an exact replica in bronze.

In the plaque, which was undoubtedly used to encase pillars in the royal palace, an *oba*, or king, is represented flanked by attendants, two of whom are warriors and two of whom are musicians. Scale is a convention by which relative importance in the culture is conveyed. The warriors are depicted larger than the musicians, and the king is the largest figure of all, wearing the traditional trappings of royalty, the cap and choker of coral beads. Strands of coral beads are suspended from the cap, and the warriors' head-dresses are ornamented with cowrie shells.

Because of the relative indestructibility of bronze, objects from the Benin culture are among the oldest to be found on the African continent. Bronzes have also been found at Ife and Igbo Ukwu. From the quantity and quality of the bronze sculptures, it is evident that Benin culture was highly developed, with a large, populous, and prosperous capital city and large areas of land under cultivation. The inhabitants were keenly sensitive to beauty in their environment and in their ornament.



Memorial Head of an Oba

West African (Nigeria), Benin kingdom (fourteenth–
seventeenth centuries)

Mid-sixteenth century A.D.

Bronze

9 1/8 in (23 cm)

Acquired through the generosity of Donald J. and Adele
C. Hall, Mr. and Mrs. Herman Robert Sutherland, an
anonymous donor, The Nelson Gallery Foundation, and
The William Rockhill Trust (by exchange): 1987

The *Memorial Head of an Oba* is one of ten so-called rolled-collar heads known to exist. Other examples are in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and the Royal Scottish Museum in Edinburgh. The rolled-collar type is one of eight kinds of memorial heads cast in Benin to commemorate the king's deceased predecessors. These memorial heads were incorporated into shrines dedicated to previous rulers.

This example has a cap and choker of coral beads. Such regalia is still worn by the king today. Six strands of coral beads fall from the cap in front of the ear and five behind. (There are often variations in the number of strands depicted.) It is commonly felt that heads of this type were all made in the first three-quarters of the sixteenth century, not long after the first Portuguese contact with the kingdom in 1485.

Benin rulers were considered divine. Their commemorative altars were furnished with various objects of bronze and ivory installed on a semicircular platform approximately twenty inches high and forty inches deep. In addition to the heads, images of standing messenger figures and equestrian figures were associated with the altar, as were pyramidal bronze bells, which were rung during prayers. A

ceremonial sword was also included. Large ivory tusks were frequently inserted into the memorial heads. This example bears an opening that may have accommodated such a tusk, which itself represented a symbolic link of communication with the ancestors. Through such a metaphorical link, current rulers could benefit from the powers and wisdom of the deceased *oba*, to whom offerings would be made throughout the year.

Although these items are very beautiful, the head was not made to be an objet d'art. It was instead meant to be a religious object commemorating an ancestor. The duality of an African ritual object accessible to Western aesthetic sensibilities is an intriguing phenomenon, and in this bronze it is even more difficult to remember the ritual function of the object because the forms, going beyond the conventional to the particular, are reminiscent of the finest sculpture of Europe.

This head was collected at the end of the last century from troops returning from the Benin punitive expedition in 1897. It remained in the same family collection until its recent acquisition by the museum. It is among the one or two best examples of its type and is a highly prized addition to the museum's collections.

Standing Figure

Central African (Zaire), Bena Lulua

c.1850

Wood

19½ in without base (49.5 cm)

Museum purchase: acquired 1984

This standing carved figure was made by a master carver of the Bena Lulua peoples of Zaire. The largest group living in the Kasai River valley, the Bena Lulua are organized into autonomous villages, each headed by a *kalamba*, who functions as a judge. In Bena Lulua culture such sculptures were used in the *Chibola* cult. Although not strictly an ancestor cult, *Chibola* is tied to a belief system that recognizes reincarnation. Followers of this cult are women who have had several miscarriages or stillbirths. Cult activities involve the propitiation of spirit forces so that the ancestor might be successfully reborn. The purpose of such a sculpture is to bring beauty, luck, and good health, especially for the newborn.

While the volumes of the body have been simplified, the scarification patterns are most particular and specific. The neck is extremely long, and the breasts are small. The arms are bent at the elbow at a right angle. The biceps are well defined, and the hands are small. The legs are long with highly stylized musculature. The head, the locus of intellectual powers, and the navel, the center of life and the link between mother and child, are emphasized. The large, cushionlike feet give a sense of balance and solidity.

The history of the Bena Lulua is one of continuous interaction with various other groups in the region, among them the Kuba, Luba, Pende, and Songye. Bena Lulua sculpture often demonstrates evidence of these interactions, but in this case, the scarification and intended use of the figure identify it unquestionably as a Bena Lulua piece.

The size of the figure helps to corroborate its mid-century date, as does the rich, warm patina that covers it. In the 1880s an internal political struggle led to the suppression of sculptural images among the Bena Lulua. This prohibition was short-lived, but once resolved it seems that figures over twelve inches in height were not made. The museum's figure is a majestic nineteen and one-half inches. The figure carries with it a very distinguished provenance. It was collected by Dr. T. Fourche, an authority on Luba and related cultures of the Kasai region in Zaire, sometime before 1940. It was then acquired by the Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale in Tervuren, Belgium. In 1972 that museum deaccessioned the piece, and it entered a private collection. In 1984 it was purchased by The Nelson-Atkins Museum.



Standing Male Ancestor Figure

Central African (Zaire), Hemba, Niembo style with
annulate neck

Nineteenth century

Wood

31³/₄ in (80.6 cm)

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Morton I. Sosland in honor of the
fiftieth anniversary of the Nelson Gallery: 1981



Among the Hemba of Zaire ancestor worship is widespread and penetrates all aspects of society. First we must remember that these sculptures are not works of art made gratuitously to satisfy the aesthetic desires of the Hemba. Rather, they interact dramatically with the ritual lives of the Hemba. They facilitate the meting out of justice and the healing of the sick. These are decisions that will affect the future political, economic, and social health of the community. They represent the system of laws. It is only natural to want to draw upon the wisdom and judgment of the once-powerful leaders of the community to assist in these decisions. These figures are the point of contact with the ancestors.

While the belief systems of these cultures may be difficult for the uninitiated to understand, the physical form of the figures as form is readily understandable to Western eyes. Their abstract shapes appealed to the mind and eye of the artists of the early years of the twentieth century. Although African sculpture had been available in ethnographic collections for nearly a century, it was not generally known to the public at large. As the material became more plentiful in Europe, its crystalline forms and dynamic treatment of volume found receptive audiences in the West, and its impact on Western aesthetic taste was enormous.

Much sculpture relating to the Hemba ancestor cult exists and is masculine in form. The serenity of expression and balanced pose of this example are particularly engaging. The flexed arms rest upon the torso in sublime repose. The eyes are half-closed in the ovoid face and a straplike beard graces the jaw and chin. Four annulated surfaces characterize the neck, and the navel protrudes from the round, bulbous belly. The distinctive hairstyle of the Hemba is in the form of a cross. The back of the hair is divided into four sections that are overlapped in such a way that the result is usually the form of a cross. In this example, however, the hair is described as being in the form of a bow, a rather less organized configuration than the cross.

Because the community desires the continued counsel of the wise ancestor, and the wooden figure represents a point of focus for the spirit, the figure is adorned and anointed.





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Carved Lintel

New Zealand, Maori
Eighteenth century

Totara wood and haliotis shell

40¹/₄ × 15³/₄ × 2 in (102.2 × 40 × 5.1 cm)

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Morton I. Sosland: 1976

For the Maori all objects served a practical or symbolic function, and everything man made had its own spiritual life. This beautiful wood lintel, once in the collection of the Berlin Museum, shows a standing figure, or *tiki*, of an ancestor surrounded by fighting *manaia* with curvilinear bodies, interlocked beaks, and contorted limbs. Every surface vibrates with intricate carving. The figure is depicted with an incised head somewhat out of proportion to its body. Heavy eyebrows overhang the triangular eyes whose pupils are wood encircled with haliotis shell irises in opalescent blue and green. The mouth is in the shape of a figure eight. A long tongue stretches out to touch the chest. This thrust-out tongue is a gesture of war or supernatural power, and on a lintel it serves as protection. Below the torso of the figure can be seen the head of a whale with a circular eye, again inset with haliotis shell and an open mouth. The figure's hands and toes with their three digits allude to a

birdlike persona in addition to that of the human figure.

The meaning of the *manaia* for the traditional Maori remains a mystery. It seems to be a symbol of the prestige and power of the ancestral *tiki* it accompanies. In general the *tiki* seems to represent primeval man. The lintel is one of the most important parts of the house and was installed in such a way that it might be hurriedly dismantled and taken to a secure place for safety. The reddish brown color is achieved by a combination of red clay and shark liver oil, which was applied when it was made. This mixture not only imparts color to the sculpture but protects it from the ravages of the elements.

One of the earliest Maori artifacts in North America, the lintel is thought to have been collected on one of Captain Cook's voyages. The German John Reinhold Forster and his son George accompanied Cook on his second voyage in 1773, and they may be the link to the Berlin Museum.

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Bandolier Bag

Native American, Western Great Lakes

1850

Beads, cloth, and wool

12¹/₁₆ × 6⁵/₈ in (31 × 17 cm)

Gift of J. Wilson Nance and Martha T. Nance in honor
of Mr. and Mrs. Reginald G. Thomson: 1977

It is estimated that before contact with Europeans the number of Native American languages on both continents was somewhere between one thousand and two thousand. In North America alone there are more than two hundred classifiable Native American languages. These represent only those that are well enough known to classify. Just as the Native American languages were diverse, so too were their artistic traditions. The bandolier bag and the blanket (plate 136) are examples of this diversity.

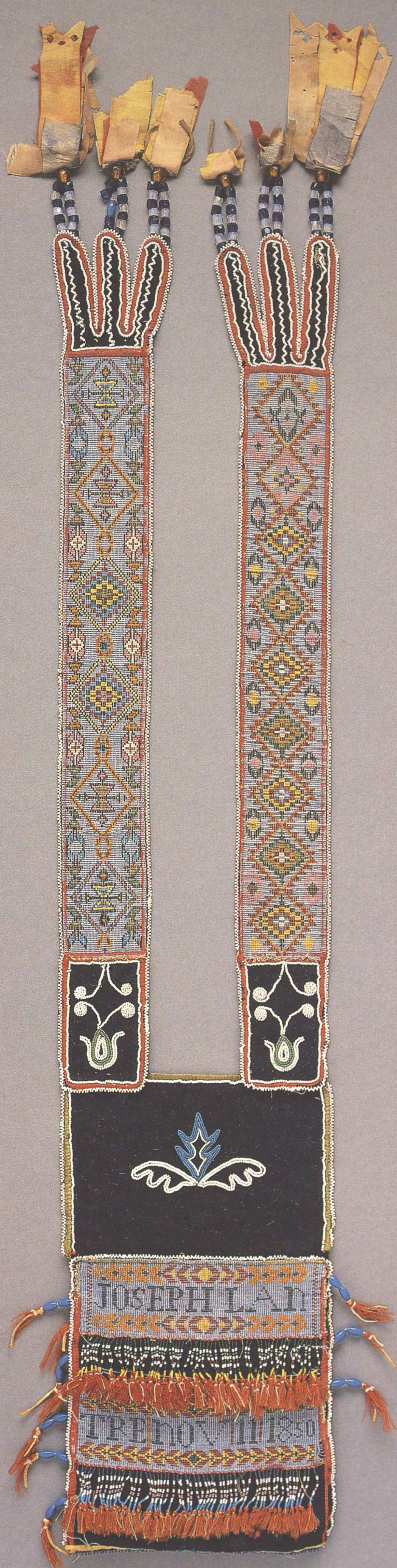
The bandolier bag is from the Western Great Lakes region and was either commissioned by Joseph Lantre on November 11, 1850, or was given to him on that date. Another bag of quite similar design bearing Joseph Lantre's name and the date March 21, 1851, is in the Chandler-Pohrt Collection at Historic Fort Wayne, a branch of the Detroit Historical Department.

Bandolier bags were an essential part of the ceremonial costume, and one or more might be worn by both men and women. They served as symbols of prestige because vast numbers of beads and a great amount of skill and labor were required to make them. Since their function was only that of embellishment and prestige, the pouches were blind in many cases and could hold nothing. The pouch in this example is small, only twelve by seven inches, but func-

tional. The bag is made of wool trade cloth decorated on the face with two loom-beaded panels and around the edges with silk tassels on short strings of beads. The lower edges of the beaded panels are fringed with tassels of silk yarn hung on short strings of seed beads.

The Great Lakes area falls into the classification of Native American cultures known as Woodlands. The Woodlands area is vast, including the entire eastern part of Canada and the United States, with general boundaries from the Atlantic to Hudson's Bay, from Labrador to Florida, and with the Mississippi as its western boundary. The repeated contact with Europeans in this area brought Native Americans wonderful trade goods and new techniques. Beads, embroidery, and silk ribbons were willingly adapted by Native Americans for their own uses. Floral motifs and simple linear and geometric patterns are predominant in this example.

Like many other people, the Native American had no word in his numerous languages for art as an independent concept. However, Western eyes would not dismiss the elegant decoration of this bag. The complicated patterning and sense of design as well as the enormous effort expended in its creation certainly qualify it for our serious consideration in the aesthetic traditions of the world.



Chief's Wearing Blanket

Navajo, from New Mexico

c. 1878-1885

Wool

59 × 75 1/4 in (150 × 191 cm)

Museum purchase: acquired 1933

The Navajo were the last of the Native American peoples to migrate to the southwestern part of the United States. As seminomadic sheep herders needing good pasture for their flocks, they lived in groups, or clans. They had become shepherds in the mid-seventeenth century, acquiring their initial stock in retaliatory raids on the Spanish colonizers along the Middle Rio Grande. The Spanish in turn found the Navajo a convenient source of slave labor for their mining operations in Mexico. The Navajo life of deprivation and hardship, however, in no way diminished the vital character of their art, especially that of their blankets. They seem to have learned their weaving skills from their neighbors, the Pueblo. Their looms are portable, easily disassembled and reassembled. Their designs are stored in their minds. No preparatory drawings are made, and patterns are seldom, if ever, duplicated. The color combinations, the shapes, and the patterns are always fresh.

The vital designs of the blankets express the strength of the people themselves. The Navajo are the largest single Native American tribe in the United States. The earliest surviving blankets date from the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth century and are generally in fragmentary form. This example represents the best-known style of Navajo blanket, the third-phase chief's blanket, the predominant style from the 1860s until the turn of the century. The earlier first-phase blankets, inspired by Pueblo designs, were comprised of horizontal stripes, or bars. As the style evolved, the diamond pattern was overlaid across the horizontal bars. As the third phase itself progressed, the diamonds were integrated with the bars and a balance developed between the two, as we see here. The serrated edge of the diamonds gives a sense of added vigor and vitality to the pattern. Not native to the Navajo, the serrated edge is an influence that emanates from the northern Mexican weaving center of Saltillo. In the later Germantown blankets this

serration itself becomes the dominant design theme. The basic format of this third-phase blanket, known as the "nine-point formation," consists of a full diamond in the center surrounded by eight triangular elements at the edges.

As we view this design flat on the page in two dimensions, it has one central focus; however, the Navajo saw it as having two. For them the blanket was not meant to be a two-dimensional object. It was made as a garment to be worn on the body. As such, a second focus formed in the front where the two edges came together. In the case of this blanket, a completed diamond appeared in the center front, as well as in the center of the back.

The blanket is made of handspun native wool. The brown and white wool is natural; the blue is dyed with indigo; the red is bayeta. In the earliest times, before the Spanish introduction of indigo, blue dye may have been obtained from blue corn and blue clay. Indigo produces a long-lasting, rich color, and it was easy to use because it did not require boiling. *Bayeta* is the Spanish word for "baize." This flannel fabric was woven in many colors, but red was the favorite for export. The Navajo favored a particular color of red with a bluish tint obtained by using a cochineal dye. Because it was expensive to obtain the dye itself, it was easier for the Navajo to trade for the material.

With the advent of the railroad, trading posts sprang up along the routes and a spirited exchange of goods began. The Native Americans offered blankets for tools, canned goods, tobacco, and the like. As this practice continued, the quality of the blankets often suffered because they were now seen as an easy form of currency and were no longer used for clothing. Traders such as Juan Lorenzo Hubbell and J. B. Moore promoted a popular version of the blanket that has come to be known as the Navajo "rug." The blanket shown here was purchased from Fred Harvey, who operated a large outlet for fine Navajo material in the early 1900s.



Acknowledgments

This volume represents a unique opportunity to highlight the rich collections of The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art.

Historically, the staff of the museum has been small. The everyday operation of the organization has had to take precedence over the research and publication of the holdings. Many areas within the collections represent virgin territory for scholars; few have been researched fully. It has been fifteen years since an edition of the museum's *Handbook* was last published. Moreover, many of the pieces selected for inclusion in this volume had never before been photographed in color. This undertaking alone represented an enormous task. Virtually every photograph reproduced here was taken with the present publication in mind.

No project of such scope can be accomplished single-handedly. I am indeed grateful to the museum's director, Marc F. Wilson, for his confidence in my ability to accomplish this pleasurable task. I have known the collection for twenty years, so in most cases I have written about old friends. Generous funding for the project was obtained through the thoughtful efforts of Janice C. Kreamer, president of the Greater Kansas City Community Foundation, with the able assistance of Michael S. Churchman, director

of development for the museum. E. G. Schempf sensitively photographed the works, often under primitive and difficult conditions. Superintendent of the Collections Bobby Hornaday and his crew expertly moved the objects for the photography project. Registrar Ann Erbacher and her staff cheerfully provided access to files and handled the cataloging of the new transparencies. Julie Thorson, head of computer services, kept the electronic support system running smoothly so that deadlines were always met. The curatorial staff, especially Henry Adams, David Binkley, Janet Carpenter, Robert Cohon, Dorothy H. Fickle, Wai-Kam Ho, George L. McKenna, Deborah Emont Scott, and Roger Ward, have vetted the entries and made thoughtful suggestions that saved me from errors of interpretation, particularly in areas in which I can at best be described as "amateur." Mary Ellen Young assisted me in the proofreading stages.

Grateful appreciation is due to Kristie Wolferman, whose unpublished thesis *The Creation of the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art: 1911-1933* was a helpful aid in efficiently synthesizing the events of the early organizational years of the museum.

ELLEN R. GOHEEN



